August 19, 2020

THE AFFAIR BEHIND RON MEYER'S NBCU EXIT

JIM BELUSHI, POT FARMER

KAMALA ELECTRIFIES HOLLYWOOD

KIM MASTERS ON SUMNER REDSTONE'S FINAL INTERVIEW

'YOU CAN'T BE POLITE OR TIPTOE OR BE MODEST'

Multiple Emmy nominee **ISSA RAE** on navigating the industry, making history if *Insecure* wins for comedy series, and building a lasting legacy: 'My longevity will be opening the door for others'

18 EMMY® NOMINATIONS

INCLUDING

OUTSTANDING DRAMA SERIES

"THE BEST SEASON YET."

CNN

"AS THE DANGER RISES, SO DOES THE BRILLIANCE."

CHICAGO SUN-TIMES

OZARK

N

FYC.NETFLIX.COM

“FUNNIEST SHO

“PHENO

WHAT WE DO IN THE
SHADOWS

8 EMMY® AWARD NOMINATIONS

OUTSTANDING COMEDY SERIES

3 NOMINATIONS – OUTSTANDING
WRITING FOR A COMEDY SERIES

OUTSTANDING
PRODUCTION DESIGN

OUTSTANDING
CASTING

OUTSTANDING
PICTURE EDITING

OUTSTANDING
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The Hollywood Reporter

Issue No. 22, August 19, 2020

FEATURES

52 'My Longevity Will Be Opening the Door for Others'
Making way for diverse writers at one of her two production companies, *Insecure* creator-star Issa Rae talks early doubts, her project with Jordan Peele and navigating Hollywood.

60 Cannabis for the Soul (Acres and Acres of It)
To understand why Jim Belushi departed Hollywood to farm "a plant that heals people," you must first know the defining trauma of his life — the death of his brother John.

66 *Darkman* Turns 30
Liam Neeson, Frances McDormand, Danny Elfman and many others recall the arduous making of the cult classic that repulsed test audiences before winning over critics and opening at No. 1: "The studio said, 'There's nothing we can do to save this film.' "

70 How to Helm a Last Hurrah
Three nominated directors were tasked with wrapping up such beloved shows as *Homeland*, *Modern Family* and *Schitt's Creek*, a responsibility they didn't take lightly: "If you end it badly, the whole series is colored in a different light."

52

"You can't be polite or tiptoe or modest about these things," says Issa Rae. She was photographed Aug. 6 at the Paramour Estate in Silver Lake.

Photographed here and for the cover by **Erik Carter**

5 EMMY® NOMINATIONS

"TV'S BEST ENSEMBLE"

THE HOLLYWOOD REPORTER

OUTSTANDING SUPPORTING ACTRESS
IN A DRAMA SERIES
LAURA DERN

OUTSTANDING CASTING
FOR A DRAMA SERIES

OUTSTANDING CONTEMPORARY
MAKEUP (NON-PROSTHETIC)

OUTSTANDING SUPPORTING ACTRESS
IN A DRAMA SERIES
MERYL STREEP

OUTSTANDING PRODUCTION
DESIGN FOR A NARRATIVE
CONTEMPORARY PROGRAM
(ONE HOUR OR MORE)

BIG LITTLE LIES

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The Hollywood Reporter

Issue No. 22, August 19, 2020

THE REPORT

11 Epic vs. Apple
A legal war between the *Fortnite* gamemaker and the tech giant has the potential to become a major antitrust showdown that impacts the entire streaming economy.

18 Sumner Redstone's Last Interview, Revisited
In December 2013, before a legal war erupted and his Viacom and CBS empire was thrown into tumult, the mogul, then 90, allowed *THR*'s Kim Masters to visit his estate, hoping to prove his mental fitness.

20 7 Days of Deals

22 The Race

ABOUT TOWN

25 Kamala Harris as VP Choice Electrifies Industry Supporters
Joe Biden's selection of the California senator as his running mate sparks joy in the entertainment world, which will be a key source of campaign dollars: "Hollywood knows a star when we see one."

26 A Private Club's Pandemic Pivots
L.A.'s Griffin Club reopened with outdoor exercise equipment and dining and has just debuted a new pool: "We have a lot of outdoor space."

30 Rambling Reporter

THE BUSINESS

34 Creative Space: Amy Gravitt
HBO's comedy chief on WarnerMedia's shake-up, Michaela Coel's future and Hollywood's uncertain path back to humor.

36 Everyone Is Invited to Play Here
More than half of kids series on major networks and streamers are inclusive, which execs say attracts diverse talent behind the scenes and can "create loyalty for life" among viewers.

STYLE

40 Outside Is In
Nail and hair salons and gyms, restricted from indoor services, are migrating to the only places where health guidelines allow them to operate: patios, rooftops and sidewalks.

49 Industry Parents Brace for Remote School 2.0
As fall semesters start in Los Angeles — once again virtually, because of the pandemic — families look to online tutoring, in-home helpers, ditching private schools and even leaving the city altogether: "You can consider renting an RV and taking school on the road."

REVIEWS

75 *The Vow*
Jehane Noujaim and Karim Amer direct HBO's effective and sympathetic deep-dive docuseries about the notorious Hollywood-adjacent NXIVM cult.

76 *Hoops*
Netflix's new adult animated comedy from Ron Funches about a high school basketball team is heavy on coarseness, light on heart.

BACKLOT

81 The Top 25 Film Schools in America
A career behind the camera begins at these elite institutions (even as COVID-19 complicates curricula).

25
In November, Kamala Harris (left) cooked masala dosa at the Los Angeles home of Mindy Kaling, one of the Democratic veep candidate's many Hollywood supporters.

34
"With comedy, you have the extra bar of going back to work and taking certain precautions and, on top of that, you have to be funny," says HBO executive Amy Gravitt. She was photographed Aug. 10 in her North Hollywood home office.

60
"I raised my kids [in Los Angeles], went to all the premieres. I went to award shows. I've been to Toscana 1,600 times," says Oregon farmer Jim Belushi. "I have a grateful feeling for the life I had there — I'm just moving onto a kind of new reinvention."

CORRECTION
John Amos was misidentified in a photo that accompanied a story about a reimagined episode of *Good Times* (*THR* 8/12).

GRAVITT: HUSSEIN KATZ. BELUSHI: TYLER MADDOX/COURTESY OF BELUSHI'S FARM.

26 EMMY® NOMINATIONS

INCLUDING

OUTSTANDING LIMITED SERIES

"A MASTERPIECE"

NPR

OUTSTANDING LEAD ACTOR IN A LIMITED SERIES OR MOVIE
JEREMY IRONS

OUTSTANDING LEAD ACTRESS IN A LIMITED SERIES OR MOVIE
REGINA KING

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JOVAN ADEPO

OUTSTANDING SUPPORTING ACTOR IN A LIMITED SERIES OR MOVIE
LOUIS GOSSETT JR.

OUTSTANDING SUPPORTING ACTRESS IN A LIMITED SERIES OR MOVIE
JEAN SMART

OUTSTANDING DIRECTING FOR A LIMITED SERIES, MOVIE OR DRAMATIC SPECIAL
NICOLE KASSELL

OUTSTANDING DIRECTING FOR A LIMITED SERIES, MOVIE OR DRAMATIC SPECIAL
STEPH GREEN

OUTSTANDING DIRECTING FOR A LIMITED SERIES, MOVIE OR DRAMATIC SPECIAL
STEPHEN WILLIAMS

OUTSTANDING WRITING FOR A LIMITED SERIES, MOVIE OR DRAMATIC SPECIAL
DAMON LINDELOF, CORD JEFFERSON

OUTSTANDING CASTING FOR A LIMITED SERIES, MOVIE OR SPECIAL

OUTSTANDING CINEMATOGRAPHY FOR A LIMITED SERIES OR MOVIE (2)

OUTSTANDING FANTASY/SCI-FI COSTUMES

OUTSTANDING MAIN TITLE DESIGN

OUTSTANDING MUSIC COMPOSITION FOR A LIMITED SERIES, MOVIE OR SPECIAL (ORIGINAL DRAMATIC SCORE)

OUTSTANDING MUSIC SUPERVISION

OUTSTANDING ORIGINAL MUSIC AND LYRICS

OUTSTANDING PRODUCTION DESIGN FOR A NARRATIVE PERIOD OR FANTASY PROGRAM (ONE HOUR OR MORE)

OUTSTANDING SINGLE-CAMERA PICTURE EDITING FOR A LIMITED SERIES OR MOVIE (3)

OUTSTANDING SOUND EDITING FOR A LIMITED SERIES, MOVIE OR SPECIAL

OUTSTANDING SOUND MIXING FOR A LIMITED SERIES OR MOVIE

OUTSTANDING SPECIAL VISUAL EFFECTS

WATCHMEN

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"THANDIE NEWTON IS AS MAGNIFICENT AS SHE EVER WAS, RETURNING IN STELLAR FORM"

SALON

WESTWORLD

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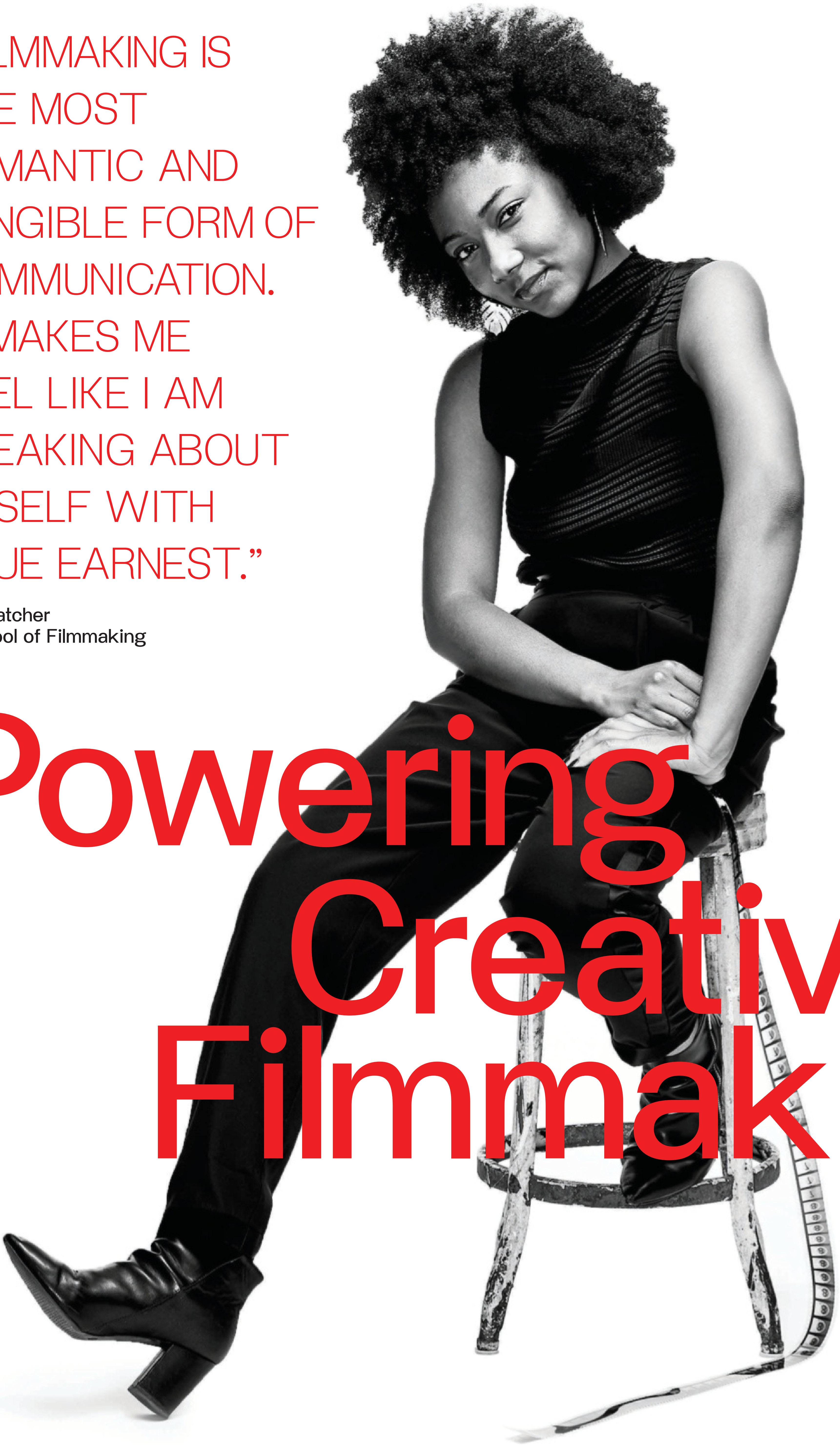
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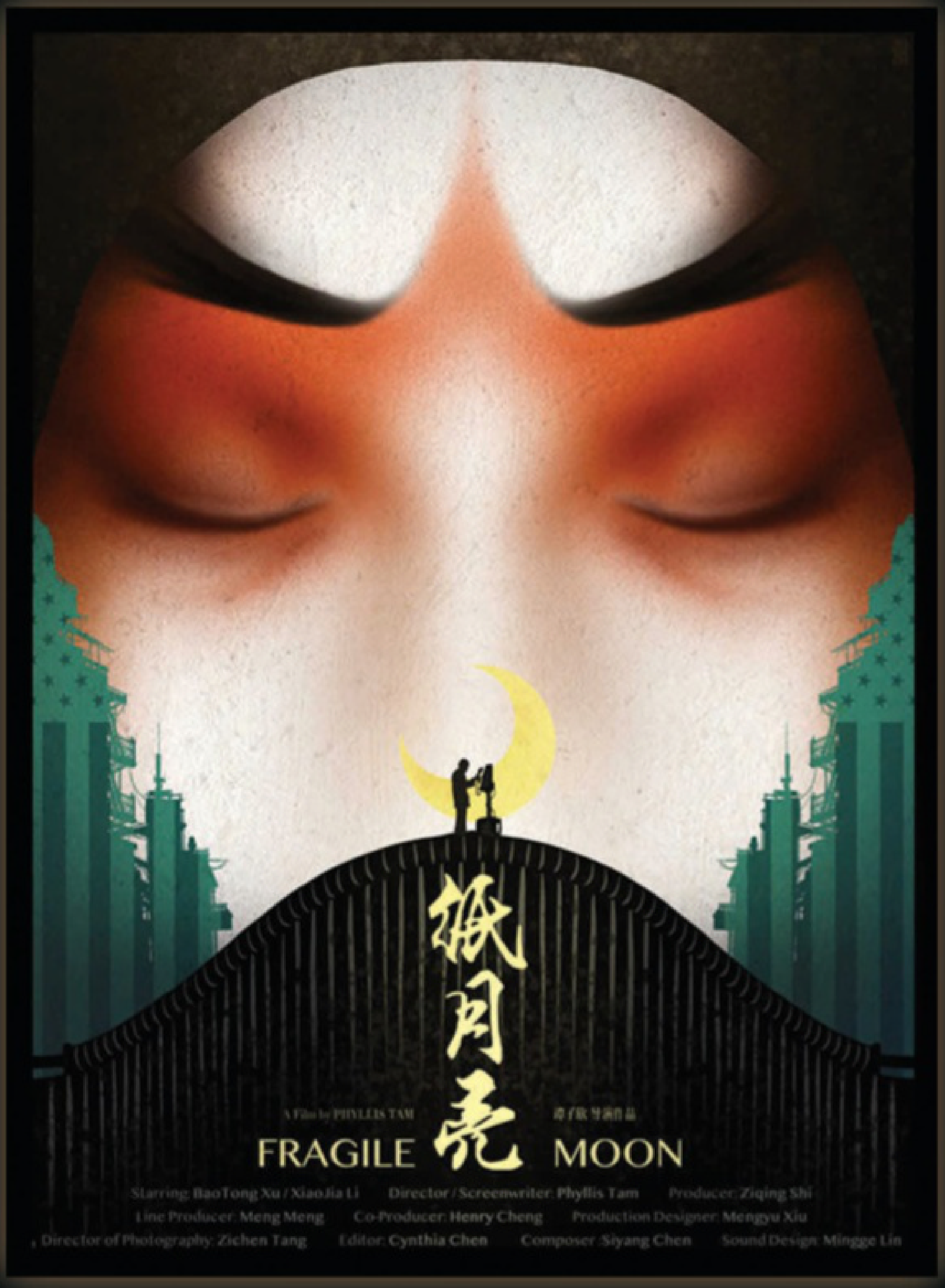
New York Film Academy Congratulates Phyllis Tam,
Finalist for the Student Academy Awards 2020

Congratulations!


纸月亮
A Film by PHYLLIS TAM
FRAGILE MOON
Starring: BaoTong Xu / XiaoJia Li
Director / Screenwriter: Phyllis Tam
Producer: Ziqing Shi
Line Producer: Meng Meng
Co-Producer: Henry Cheng
Production Designer: Mengyu Xiu
Director of Photography: Zichen Tang
Editor: Cynthia Chen
Composer: Siyang Chen
Sound Design: Mingge Lin

FRAGILE MOON

Finalist for Narrative (Domestic Film Schools)

Written and Directed by

Phyllis Tam, MFA Filmmaking '20

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↑ Film

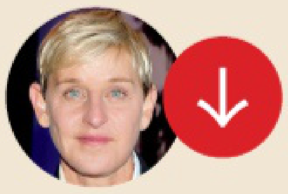
Ron Meyer's Exit
The affair behind the NBCU exec's ouster **p. 12**

Moguls

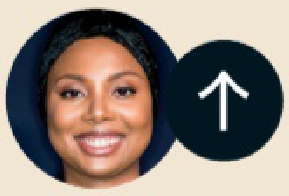
Redstone, Revisited
The media mogul's final interview remembered **p. 18**

Heat Index

Cardi B
The artist's song "WAP," featuring Megan Thee Stallion, hits No. 1 on the Billboard Hot 100 and draws a seven-day record 93 million U.S. streams in the week ending Aug. 13.



Ellen DeGeneres
Top producers Ed Glavin, Kevin Leman and Jonathan Norman are ousted from the host's daytime talk show amid an investigation into reports of a toxic work culture.



Misha Green
The creator's HBO horror drama *Lovecraft Country* draws an encouraging 1.4 million viewers for its premiere Aug. 16, in line with *Watchmen*'s debut in October.

Len Amato
The HBO Films, Cinemax and miniseries president exits, becoming the latest casualty of WarnerMedia's efforts to consolidate its executive ranks.

Showbiz Stocks

↑ **$55.18** (+1.2%)
ORACLE (ORCL)
The tech giant is known for its enterprise software, not consumer media, but reports that it is forming a bid to buy TikTok sent its stock upward.

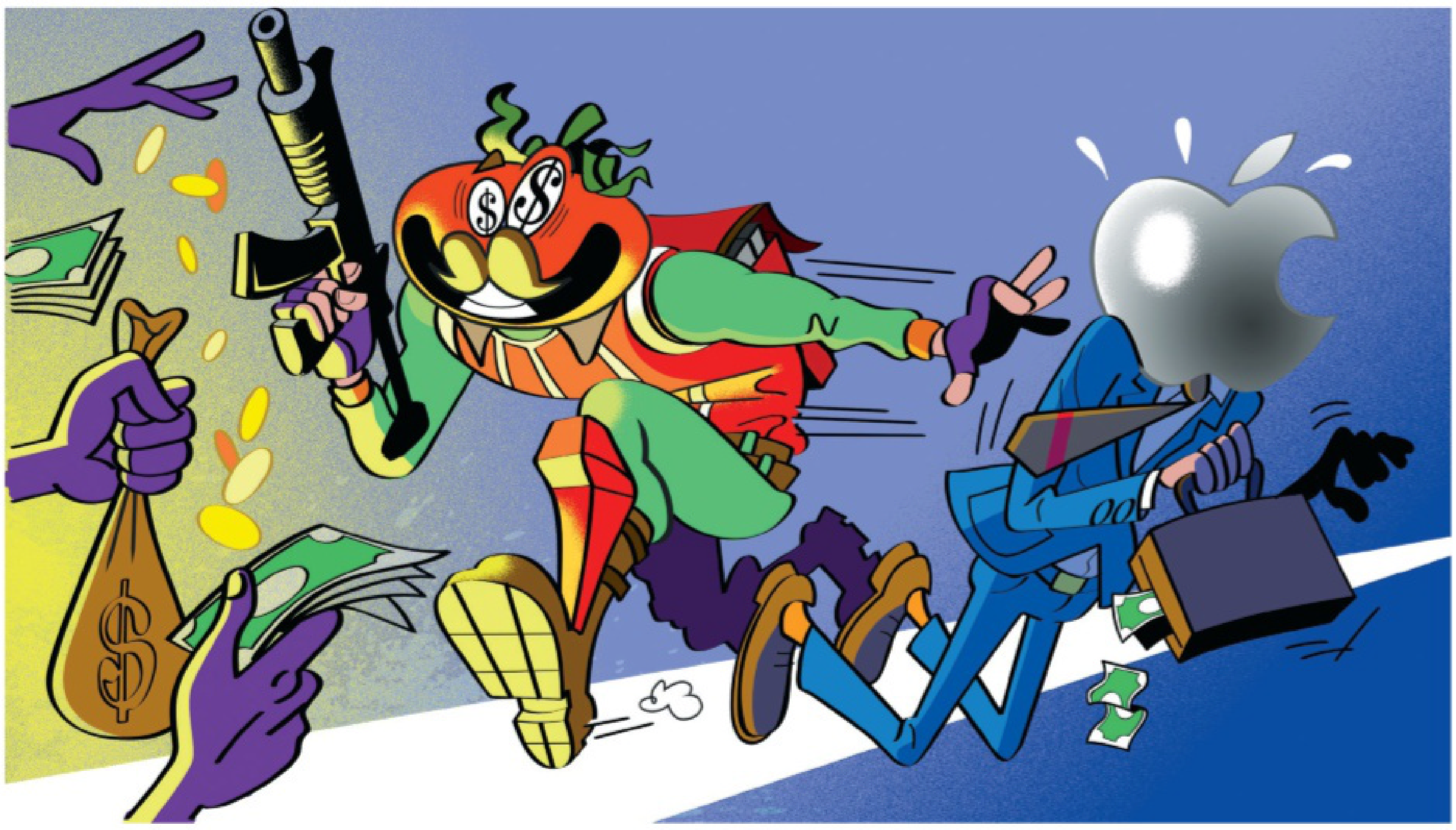
↓ **$128.91** (-1.3%)
DISNEY (DIS)
The shortened NBA season has been a ratings bonanza for ESPN, but with college football in jeopardy, it may be a grim winter for the sports channel.

Aug. 11-18

SWEENEY: RACHEL LUNA/GETTY IMAGES. MEYER: DAVID PAUL MORRIS/BLOOMBERG VIA GETTY IMAGES. CARDI B: STEVE GRANITZ/WIREIMAGE. DEGENERES: STEFANIE KEENAN/GETTY IMAGES FOR RH. GREEN: GILBERT CARRASQUILLO/FILMMAGIC. AMATO: MICHAEL LOCCISANO/GETTY IMAGES FOR HBO.

The Report

Behind the Headlines



This Streaming Battle Will Be Epic

The *Fortnite* gamemaker's legal war against Apple over App Store fees may turn into a major antitrust showdown that reshapes studio deals with big-tech platforms **BY ERIQ GARDNER**

When thinking about the future of entertainment, consider the differences between credit cards and movie theaters. The major credit card companies play an important role in facilitating consumer purchases and, for that, they get a small percentage of each transaction. Theaters, meanwhile, offer the communal experience of seeing movies on the big screen. Traditionally, movie theaters have kept about 45 percent to 50 percent for the services they offer (studios get the rest). So how to think about the app stores within the streaming economy? Are they like credit cards or movie houses? Three years ago, one executive chose his side. "The system is pretty unfair at the moment," Epic Games founder **Tim Sweeney** told a gaming website back then. "These app stores take 30 percent of your revenue for distribution … That's strange because Mastercard, Visa and other companies that handle transactions take 2 percent or 3 percent of the revenue."

Sweeney's grievance hasn't abated, and Aug. 14, it escalated into an antitrust lawsuit against Apple (plus another against Google). After Epic attempted to bypass Apple's 30 percent "tax" on in-game purchases by instituting a direct-payment system, Apple pulled Epic's megahit game *Fortnite* from its App Store on Aug. 13. Epic returned fire in federal court and shamed Apple with a video that parodied the tech giant's iconic dystopian "1984" commercial.

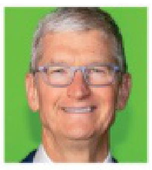
Sweeney

But what if the Apple App Store is closer in spirit to a movie theater for providing a premium experience? If so, taking 30 percent isn't quite as outrageous. As software developer **Darel Rex Finley** put it on his website in June, people like Sweeney "want Apple to provide its unprecedentedly secure, piracy-proof, malware-proof, junkware-proof, revenue-generating, vibrant platform to them *for free*." Apple concurs. "In the nearly 12 years since the App Store debuted, the best measure of its success is the dynamism it has unleashed and the state of the app economy today," said Apple's App Store chief **Dan Matray** at a conference in Europe the same month.

The court battle pitting Epic against Apple is one between a game developer and a tech behemoth, but the litigation could have an outsized impact on the movie and TV sectors. Streaming apps like Netflix and Spotify have eschewed anything like the 30 percent fee, instead forcing subscribers to sign up for subscriptions on their websites. And Apple and Google have sidestepped any issue by creating a special exemption for so-called "reader apps" that allow users to merely access existing subscriptions (such as a digital newspaper subscription). But now that theatrical windowing has blown up thanks to the COVID-19 pandemic, and a studio like Disney

Illustration by **Gabriel Corbera**

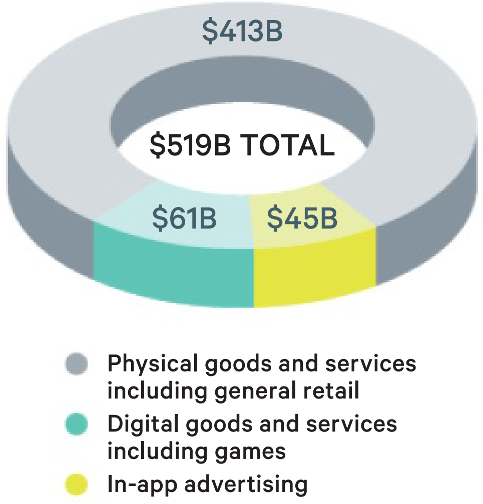
wishes to premiere a tentpole like *Mulan* on its streaming app for $30, uncomfortable questions arise about what nonsubscription money might be owed by the studio to other app platforms owned by tech giants. When it comes to the release of films in the PVOD (premium video-on-demand) window, one senior entertainment exec contends to *THR*, the split that Apple and other platforms are asking for is "nothing" compared to the 50/50 split with theaters. In most cases, a PVOD release will be an 80/20 revenue split, with the studio getting the lion's share from, say, Universal's *Trolls World Tour* and *King of Staten Island*. It's a topic on which neither Disney nor Apple will comment. And there have been escalating tensions in the past year between streamers and the digital middlemen. NBCUniversal's streaming service Peacock isn't on Roku because of an impasse about how much advertising inventory the latter should get from the former. An individual close to the talks tells *THR* that Roku is demanding 15 percent of the ad space in the new streaming app. A similar problem has kept HBO Max off Amazon Fire, say sources, with the added complication that Amazon wishes to keep HBO as a channel on its own streaming app, Prime, which means it would control the viewing experience. The dispute between Amazon and HBO parent AT&T earned some attention at a July hearing in Congress where Amazon's **Jeff Bezos**, Facebook's **Mark Zuckerberg**, Google's **Sundar Pichai** and Apple's **Tim Cook** testified before an antitrust subcommittee.


Cook

Despite the lack of attention among lawmakers and the seeming swiftness in how Epic launched its action, Apple couldn't have been too surprised. Not only is Apple facing an antitrust investigation by European Union authorities over Spotify's complaints about the 30 percent fee, but last year, the U.S. Supreme Court decided that consumers can sue when those fees are passed along to them as the cost of products and services. (Meaning, tens of millions of *Fortnite* players could soon file their own antitrust claims against Apple.) In its briefs to the Supreme Court, Apple tried to avoid that outcome by warning of "duplicative damages," saying that suits by app developers would suffice. To the notion that app makers would be too afraid to take on a mighty giant, Apple responded, "It is implausible that no one in this wide range of sophisticated companies has the ability and wherewithal to sue Apple, if they truly felt wronged."

Apple's $519 Billion App Store Economy

In 2019, $61 billion in commerce on the platform was driven by digital services (including games)



Source: Analysis Group report, supported by Apple. (June 15)

That prophesy has now been realized. Epic will claim that Apple only maintains its monopoly power by imposing technical and contractual restrictions and has violated the Sherman Antitrust Act through its denial of an "essential facility" — access to software on iPhones — though no one should think that Epic's case is a slam dunk. The game company rolled out an impressive PR campaign to accompany its court effort and has a sterling legal team at Cravath, Swaine & Moore that includes **Christine Varney**, onetime head of the Justice Department's antitrust division, and **Katherine Forrest**, a former federal judge in New York, but may nevertheless contend with a judicial system that's been reluctant to interfere in a free market and impose "fair" terms between buyer and seller.

"It's tough to prove one has a monopoly over its own services," says **Don Pepperman** at Baker Marquart, referring to Epic's claim that Apple has monopolized the iOs App Distribution Market. And even if Epic can define one company's app store as a relevant antitrust market, the analysis won't end there: "There's nothing in antitrust law that prohibits a monopolist from charging high fees unless it is accompanied by other anti-competitive conduct."

Natalie Jarvey contributed to this report.

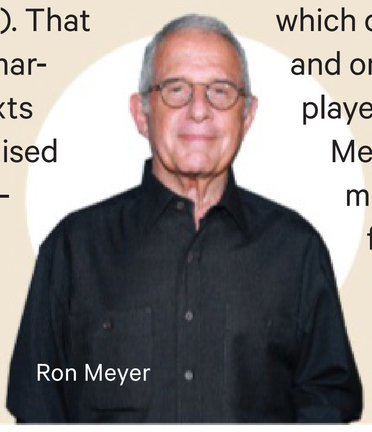
The Affair Behind Ron Meyer's NBCUniversal Departure

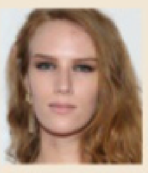
Charlotte Kirk, whose involvement with Warners CEO Kevin Tsujihara led to his ouster, is at the center of the exec's exit BY TATIANA SIEGEL

It was a case of deja vu. One of Hollywood's most powerful executives exiting in shame, with actress **Charlotte Kirk** at the center of the drama. On Aug. 18, NBCUniversal vice chairman **Ron Meyer** followed in the footsteps of former Warner Bros. chief **Kevin Tsujihara** by stepping down from his top perch after an affair with Kirk, a move that comes some 17 months after Tsujihara's exit.

Sources say Meyer, 75, became involved with a then-20-year-old Kirk in 2012, connecting at a Hollywood Foreign Press Association event in London (he was married at the time). That predates Kirk's relationship with the married Tsujihara — who, in a series of texts published by *THR* in March 2019, promised studio roles and auditions for the fledgling actress — by at least a year. Kirk did not appear to directly benefit from her relationship with Meyer's studio Universal in the same way she did from Tsujihara's Warners, where she landed small roles in *Ocean's 8* and *How to Be Single*. But sources say Meyer did introduce the actress to managers and directors in town. Kirk also did consulting work for a charity benefiting people with autism that Meyer was backing, according to a knowledgeable source. (Kirk identifies as on the autism spectrum.) In the Tsujihara instance, part of a proposed settlement involved Kirk writing a memoir, *From Autism to A-List*, and was intended to offer a way to explain any monetary payment made to the actress. That proposed settlement, which dates from 2016, called for six auditions and one role procured by **Brett Ratner**, who played a part in the scandal.

Meyer, too, had hammered out a settlement with Kirk but years later, in 2019, following the scandal that enveloped Tsujihara. It is unclear why Meyer's settlement reared its head again recently, but sources say an ex-boyfriend of Kirk's had been harassing Meyer in exchange for his silence on the affair, forcing Meyer to disclose the relationship to his bosses, who directed him to step down. In his statement, Meyer went so far as to call the move by an unnamed third party an attempt to "extort" him.


Ron Meyer


Kirk

Meyer and Tsujihara aren't the only powerful men who tried to help Kirk make inroads in Hollywood. Millennium CEO **Avi Lerner** also was said to have pressured directors to cast Kirk, as did Ratner. Kirk had a torrid relationship with Ratner's ex-partner **James Packer** that was detailed in the texts published by *THR*. In the spring, Kirk was said to be shopping for a lawyer to help enforce at least one settlement that she had reached with a third person but that had not been fulfilled.

For her part, Kirk has since married director **Neil Marshall** and stars in his upcoming horror movie *The Reckoning*, which she also wrote.

COOK: ROY ROCHLIN/WIREIMAGE. MEYER: RICH FURY/GETTY IMAGES. KIRK: BENNETT RAGLIN/GETTY IMAGES.

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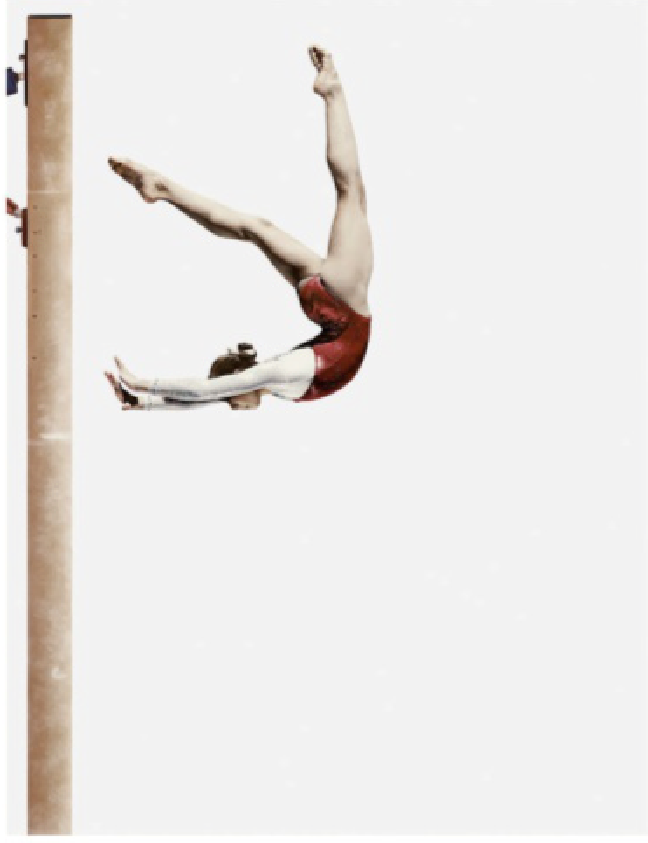

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HBO®

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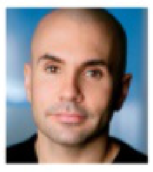
Comedy Central's *The Other Two* and *South Side* moved to HBO Max because they didn't fit with Bob Bakish's larger strategy.

What Will (and Won't) Wind Up on CBS All Access

Even as ViacomCBS touts plans to bulk up its streaming service, the company is aggressively selling shows to competitors in order to boost profits and exposure: 'The IP does revert' BY LESLEY GOLDBERG

Disney+ may be the reason that two Comedy Central scripted shows wound up moving to HBO Max. When Disney launched its streamer in November, it did so with *The Mandalorian* — an original *Star Wars* series that paired well with the franchise's original films on the service. Spinoffs of Marvel features also are in the works as Disney draws subscribers with new material that bolsters its prized assets.

Now, CBS All Access is pulling a page from Disney's playbook as ViacomCBS CEO **Bob Bakish** seeks to rebrand his nearly 6-year-old streamer in 2021 with fare from across the remerged company's vast portfolio. Comedy Central will now be a home for topical series (*The Daily Show*), comedic feature films and adult animated franchises (*Beavis and Butt-Head*, *Ren & Stimpy*). Linear originals of animated updates will be paired with their libraries in a few years on CBS All Access.



McCarthy

ViacomCBS Entertainment & Youth Group president **Chris McCarthy**, sources say, plans to have new episodes of *Beavis and Butt-Head* on the air in third-quarter 2021, with new installments eventually joining the show's original library, among others, as a CBS All Access exclusive. In the interim, sources say the strategy is to expose the company's prized library content to as broad an audience as possible on a nonexclusive basis. That's a key reason why ViacomCBS licensed its entire *South Park* library to HBO Max in a $500 million deal last year. Knowing that adult animation eventually would be pivotal to Comedy Central and All Access, the company saw HBO Max — with exclusive rights to juggernaut *Friends* — as a destination for scripted comedy and a way to better expose new viewers to *South Park* at a time when CBS All Access was best known as a home for *Star Trek* and procedurals. By the time the *South Park* deal expires in a few years, it will be the exclusive cornerstone to a deep library of new adult animation and their corresponding libraries on CBS All Access after their first-run episodes launch on Comedy Central. Those new originals will, in success, help draw subscribers, while the shows' vast libraries will offer reasons to stay. (ViacomCBS' July 1 licensing deal with Peacock is part of the same strategy: Generate revenue, expose the content to a bigger audience and eventually bring it back home exclusively.)

Programs that don't fit with ViacomCBS' hand-in-hand linear and streaming strategy — *The Other Two*, *South Side* (which moved Aug. 13 to HBO Max) and Paramount Network-turned-Netflix's *Emily in Paris* — will be licensed to third-party buyers, with the company's studio arms retaining ownership (and generating revenue from licensing fees). The same strategy is happening across the company. The *SpongeBob SquarePants* movie eventually will stream on All Access, to be joined by spinoffs that first air on Nickelodeon. The *CSI* revival, too, will remain in-house while **David Stapf**'s CBS TV Studios keeps selling content that doesn't fit at the company to third-party buyers (i.e., the *Clueless* redo at Peacock). As Bakish noted in May, "We're prioritizing franchise IP to our owned platforms. And regardless of what we do in the licensing space, remember, ultimately, these deals are rentals. The IP does revert."

Older Viewers Spur Streaming Growth This Year

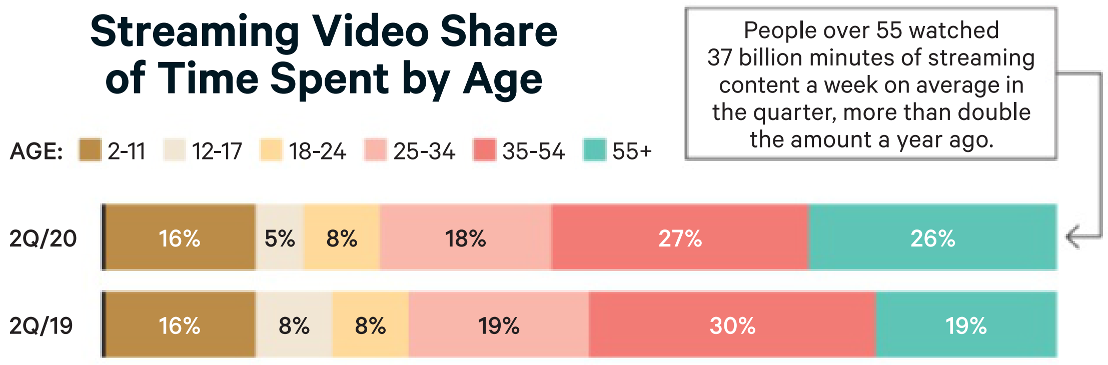
Amid stay-at-home orders, audiences 55-plus increasingly embrace internet-connected video BY RICK PORTER

Streaming is no longer a young person's game. Findings from Nielsen's latest total audience report Aug. 13 show that streaming minutes are up among all age groups — but the biggest growth has come among viewers 55 and older. That segment of the population accounted for 26 percent of average weekly streaming minutes in the second quarter of the year.

People 35 and older made up more than half of streaming consumption — 53 percent — in the period. That's up from 49 percent from 2019. A year ago, over-55s accounted for 19 percent of streaming usage.

Since streaming has exploded overall in 2020 — Americans averaged 142.5 billion minutes in the second quarter, a 74 percent increase — the volume of minutes consumed by older viewers has jumped as well. People over 55 watched 37 billion minutes of streaming content a week on average in the quarter, more than double the amount they did a year ago.

Older viewers also are still the biggest users of traditional TV: Per Nielsen, those ages 50-64 watched an average of 5 hours and 43 minutes of live or time-shifted TV daily in the first three months of 2020, while those 65 and older watched more than seven hours a day. The rise in streaming appears mostly additive to those viewers' media consumption. Traditional TV usage came down by a few minutes among viewers 50 and older early in the year, but not by as much as the corresponding rise in the use of internet-connected devices, which is a decent proxy for streaming time. Whether the jump in streaming among older viewers is a pandemic-related anomaly or spurred by Netflix and other high-profile streaming launches — Disney+, Apple TV+, Peacock, HBO Max — may be the big question.



Streaming Video Share of Time Spent by Age

People over 55 watched 37 billion minutes of streaming content a week on average in the quarter, more than double the amount a year ago.

Source: Nielsen Total Audience Report (August 2020)

BAKISH: MATT WINKELMEYER/GETTY IMAGES. *OTHER, SOUTH*: COURTESY OF COMEDY CENTRAL. MCCARTHY: COURTESY OF SUBJECT.

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The Fight Within SAG-AFTRA Over Health Care

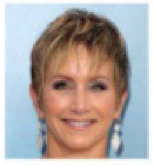
Some members feel 'betrayed' by changes to benefits in 2021 driven by 'skyrocketing' costs BY JONATHAN HANDEL

An unofficial Zoom meeting hosted by the SAG-AFTRA opposition faction Aug. 14 drew nearly 500 participants in a visceral display of fear and fury as dozens spoke out against a restructuring of the union's affiliated health plan that will hike premiums and tighten eligibility. The words used by many: "betrayed," "heartbroken" and "lawsuit." While the eight-hour session focused mainly on opposition tactics and raw emotion, members now need to dig in to figure out how to adapt to the plan's new options, most of which take effect Jan. 1.

"No one is going to steal my retirement," thundered *Sopranos* actor **Al Sapienza**, a member since 1976. "No one is going to steal my insurance. No one is going to steal my 6-year-old's insurance. Our union failed us." (The plan is distinct from SAG-AFTRA and controlled by a board of trustees equally split between management — studios, etc. — and the union.)

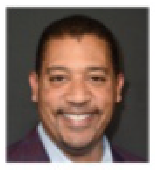
In a summary, the SAG-AFTRA Health Plan notes the moves are driven by "skyrocketing health care costs" exacerbated by the pandemic and a drop in employers' funding of the plan resulting from production shutdowns (when work evaporates, so do wage-based contributions from employers). About 10 percent of active participants and 9 percent of their dependents will lose coverage, as will 8,000 seniors and 4,000 of their dependents due to increased eligibility thresholds and other factors. Among those losing access, *THR* has learned, are SAG-AFTRA president **Gabrielle Carteris** and two of the plan's union-side trustees.

Yet many of those affected will have options via Medicare, Obamacare or mechanisms the plan is adding that cushion the blow. That went unsaid at the Zoom session, where some demanded Carteris be impeached and national executive director **David White**, also a plan trustee, be removed. Others, including meeting organizers **Shaan Sharma** — a self-described independent who runs on the union's opposition Membership First party slate — and MF leader **David Jolliffe**, are looking to next summer's union elections to oust Carteris and the Unite for Strength party slate and its allies that control the national board.



Carteris

That could mean exits not just for the plan's union-side trustees — who serve at the pleasure of the SAG-AFTRA board — but also for plan CEO **Michael Estrada**, Carteris, White and other leaders and staff. Negotiations in 2022 for the union's commercials contract and in 2023 for the TV/theatrical agreement also could become more contentious, reflecting MF's historically disputatious style. Pushing back, actor and former trustee **Claudette Sutherland** said on Facebook, "Don't create drama when we have enough daily in our political system."



White

Tempers may abate in a year, but dousing the flames will require much more adept, coordinated action by the union and plan — plus aggressive outreach to help incensed and terrified members navigate complex new health insurance options. Said one aggrieved actor, "All I have is time and rage."

Rising Premiums

As the union moves from multiple plans to a single option, active members will be levied higher fees for coverage beginning Jan. 1

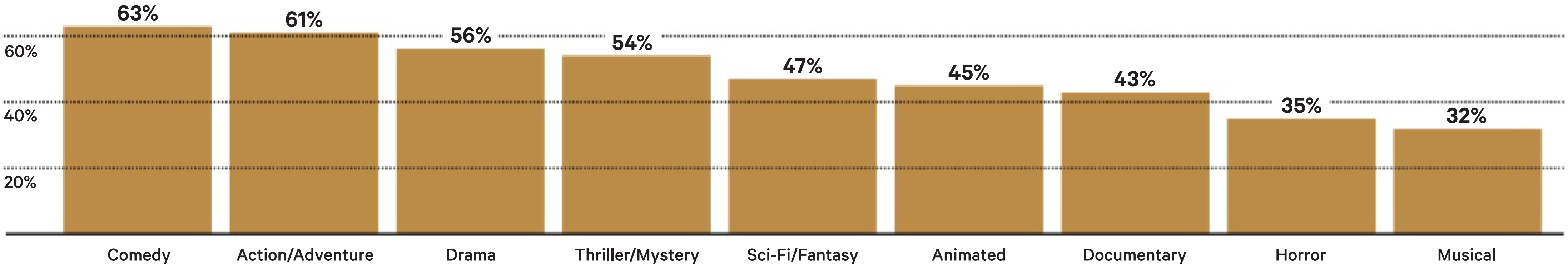
Participant only	$375 per quarter
Participant plus one dependent	$531 per quarter
Participant plus two or more dependents	$747 per quarter

Source: SAG-AFTRA Health Plan notice (Aug. 12)

THR/Morning Consult Poll

How Likely Are You to Rent or Purchase a Movie in the Following Genres?

More U.S. adults turn to comedies when paying for films on demand, a new survey finds



Source: *THR*/Morning Consult poll conducted Aug. 6-10 among a nationally representative sample of 2,200 adults.

PAPER, PILL: ADOBE STOCK. CARTERIS: LEON BENNETT/GETTY IMAGES. WHITE: ALBERTO E. RODRIGUEZ/GETTY IMAGES.

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-Omer Ben-Shachar
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Sumner Redstone's Last Interview, Revisited

In December 2013, before a legal war erupted and his Viacom and CBS empire was thrown into tumult, the mogul, then 90, allowed *THR*'s editor-at-large to visit his estate, hoping to prove his mental fitness

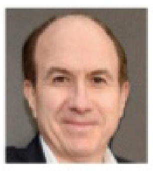
BY KIM MASTERS

As fate would have it, I believe that I was the last journalist to interview **Sumner Redstone**, who died Aug. 11 at 97. In December 2013, I schlepped to his Beverly Park Terrace estate and was ushered into a room where the mogul, then 90, waited in an armchair, with his two companions, **Manuela Herzer** and **Sydney Holland**, looking on.

Within months, Redstone's daughter, **Shari**, would allege that these infamous lady friends — Holland, then in her early 40s, and Herzer, then pushing 50 — had taken control of her father's life and milked him for tens of millions. Shari was in the interesting position of saying her father had been taken to the cleaners but was still mentally fit — otherwise, the Redstones' control of their empire might be lost. Shari would also go to war against another person who seemed to have an iron grip on her father: Viacom's then-CEO **Philippe Dauman**, who was lining his pockets by the tens of millions while running the conglomerate into the ground. (I'm not sure if Dauman was the single worst CEO I've seen in my tenure covering Hollywood, but he's a contender.)

By the time I parked in Redstone's driveway, the stage was set: Herzer's litigation with Shari would soon engulf Sumner in scandal. A picture would emerge of an old man fixated on indulging his salacious impulses. As he clung stubbornly to power, it seemed that the tenacious mogul was on the brink of destroying his empire.

All of this was not yet known at the time of my meeting with Sumner, but even then it was clear: The mandate of any interviewer was to try to figure out whether he seemed *compos mentis*. He was dressed immaculately in a suit and tie, but certainly he was physically frail. Male helpers had to assist him, even from one armchair to another. Holland jumped up repeatedly to dab saliva from his lapels. He slurred his words — he subsequently lost the ability to speak — and he would repeat certain ideas loudly and insistently: Stick with exercise and antioxidants. Education is the key. Viacom is the greatest media company in the world. Luck had nothing to do with his success.



Dauman

Redstone

Even before I could ask the first question, Redstone began, seemingly to establish his command of the situation. "I should tell you what happened last night," he said, referring to his own brief appearance at an industry dinner at the Beverly Hilton. He then rattled off the names of friends he saw — possibly, it seemed, memorized in what we might now call the person-woman-man-camera-TV tradition.

Redstone boasted that he talked to **Les Moonves**, then president and CEO of CBS, and his counterpart at Viacom, Dauman, on a daily basis and offered them advice. "I'm very busy every day," he said. These seemed like statements that a real hands-on mogul might not feel compelled to make. But certain things he knew. He said Moonves could not buy a film studio — as it was believed he was hoping to do — without his blessing. He noted that Moonves was already making smaller movies, which was true. Sure, he might have sounded delusional insisting that the broadcast business would go on forever ("They broadcast what people want to see all over the world!"), but he had said the same thing about Blockbuster a decade earlier, when he was still a vigorous man.

Reading his answers to these questions now, he comes across as more in touch than he seemed in the room. But one can only be so aggressive when questioning a visibly enfeebled 90-year-old man. He responded with some specifics but often fell back on generalities. I think he knew I was trying to pin him down, and as he looked at me with shrewd eyes, it was clear he was enjoying the game. When *THR* published the interview with a cover photo of him posing regally in his living room, his office called to say he was thrilled and wanted 50 copies sent over.

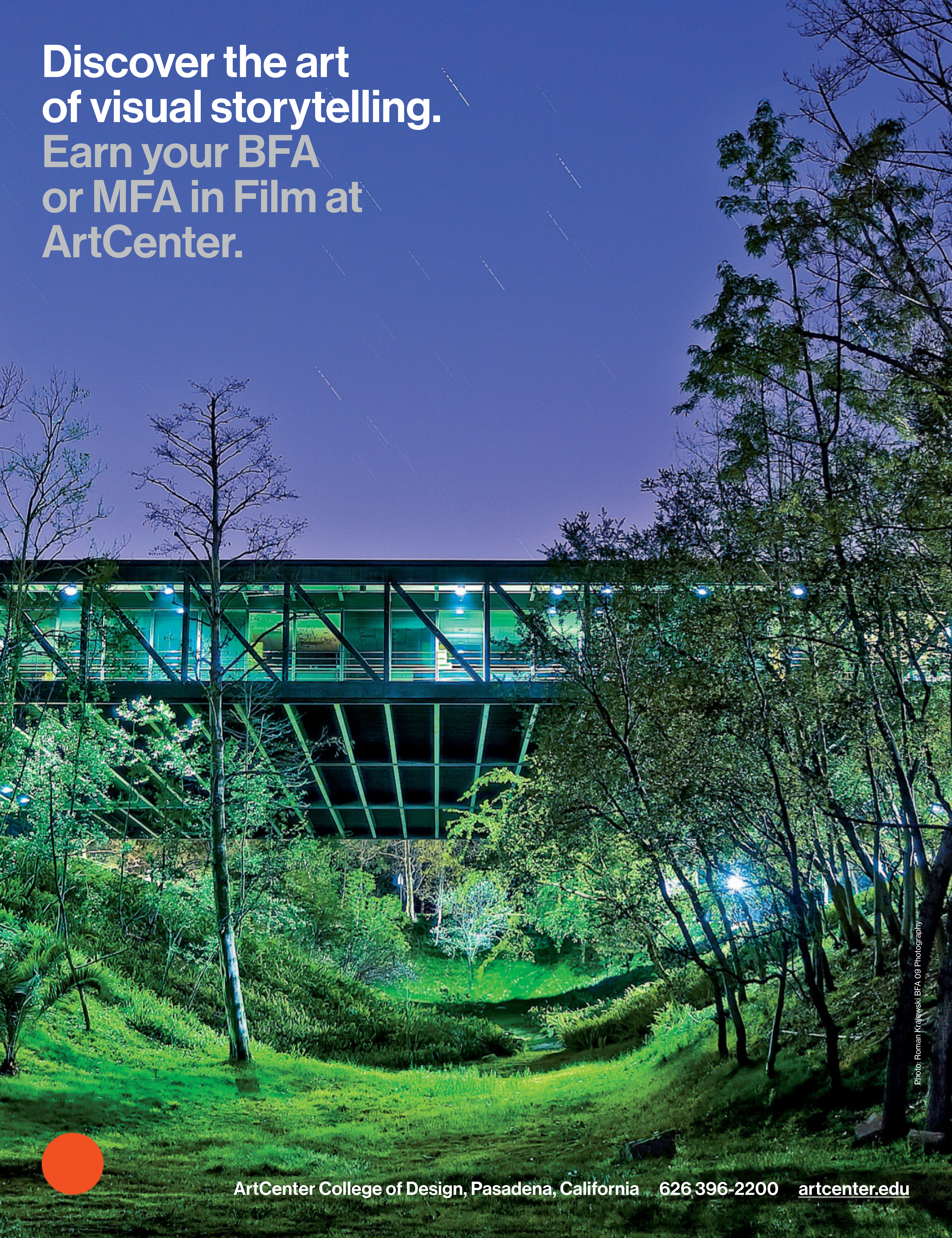
In August 2015, Holland was ejected from Redstone's house and life when his lawyer informed him that she had another lover. By October 2015, Shari also managed to get Herzer out of the house and written out of her father's will. Costly, destructive litigation ensued, and it was Herzer's demand that independent doctors examine Sumner to determine his competence that forced the onetime titan to relinquish his roles as executive chairman of CBS and Viacom in early 2016.

The final question in my Redstone interview was whether he had a proudest moment. "I'm proud about the fact that I was born in a tenement without a nickel and now I control two great companies," he said. But even then, it was clear that his refusal to accept his own mortality was taking a big toll on the greatness of his companies.

Shari continued her fight for control and by August 2016, she had forced Dauman out at Viacom. It took her until September 2018 to rid herself of Moonves, who was abundantly competent but was hampering her plans to merge CBS and Viacom. (He resigned amid sexual misconduct allegations.) Shari succeeded in merging the companies last year. ViacomCBS was valued at $30 billion then; it's valued at $16 billion today. After years in which Sumner alternately embraced and then cruelly rejected Shari as his successor, she is left to fight a daunting battle to salvage the empire he ultimately led to the brink of disaster.

Illustration by **Gabz**

DAUMAN: KEVIN MAZUR/WIREIMAGE FOR MTV. REDSTONE: KEVIN WINTER/GETTY IMAGES FOR THE HOLLYWOOD REPORTER.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7 Days of DEALS

Who's inking on the dotted line this week

CALIFORNIA TAX CREDITS LAND RUSSOS' BIG-BUDGET NETFLIX THRILLER

Deal of the Week

Peele

As Hollywood maps out a return to filming, nine new features are planning to shoot in California. On Aug. 17, the state's film commission unveiled its new round of film projects that have been selected to receive tax credits. Among the four studio and five indie titles are **Joe** and **Anthony Russo** actioner *Gray Man*, **Jessica Chastain** drama *Losing Clementine*, **Octavia Spencer** sci-fi thriller *Invasion* and an untitled **Jordan Peele** movie, one of the two films revealed as part of his first-look deal with Universal.

The slate of films — which includes Universal's untitled **Phil Lord** and **Chris Miller** horror-comedy, sports drama *Sweetwater* and **Dan Gilroy**'s drama *Faster, Cheaper, Better* — are the first feature projects to qualify for tax credits, which can include up to 25 percent back for films, since the program's third iteration launched July 1. It's unclear when the projects are beginning production.

Gray Man, a big-budget Netflix movie starring **Ryan Gosling** and **Chris Evans**, represents a considerable win for the state, which has long lost out on major studio features to more incentives-friendly filming locales like Georgia and the U.K. The pic, which will be produced under the Russo brothers' AGBO production banner, is expected to bring in an estimated $102 million in below-the-line wages and other qualified expenditures, trailing behind only *Captain Marvel* in terms of spend within the state.

Joe (left) and Anthony Russo's feature *Gray Man* stars Ryan Gosling and Chris Evans.

In total, the nine films are on track to generate nearly $284 million in qualified in-state expenditures. They're expected to employ an estimated 1,340 crew, 342 cast, and 14,397 background actors and stand-ins over a combined 374 filming days in California. Three of the five indie projects (*Losing Clementine*, action horror indie *Nightfall* and *Sweetwater*) were accepted into the program's new $10 million-and-under qualified spending category, which reserves funds for lower-budget indie films. The projects plan a significant amount of production outside the Los Angeles 30-mile studio zone, a key objective of the film incentives program. California Film Commission executive director **Colleen Bell** notes the program "is attracting the kind of big-budget films that will generate a considerable amount of jobs and in-state spending." — BRYN ELISE SANDBERG

Activist Investor Reveals $715 Million Disney Stake

Big Deal

With the pandemic accelerating changes in the media industry, financier **Dan Loeb**'s investment firm Third Point is pivoting toward a less activist and more "quality"-driven approach to investing. One of the first moves? Quietly moving from a confrontational approach to Sony Corp., led by CEO **Kenichiro Yoshida**, toward a nine-figure bet with The Walt Disney Co.

Last June, the activist investor disclosed a $1.5 billion stake in Sony, arguing that the firm should spin off its semiconductor business to focus on gaming and entertainment. Third Point's latest financial disclosure form on Aug. 17, however, shows that it sold off its direct Sony stock holdings last quarter. Sony shares are now trading at nearly double what they were when Third Point acquired its stake. While the company may still have a stake in Sony through equity swaps or other derivatives, Loeb's latest letter to Third Point investors, obtained by *THR*, suggests that the company is using the pandemic to rethink its investing approach.

From left: Bob Chapek, Dan Loeb, Kenichiro Yoshida

In the letter, Loeb cited Disney as an example of a company that fits that bill. Loeb praised Disney CEO **Bob Chapek** and called the decision to premiere *Mulan* on Disney+ a "defining moment," arguing that the streaming market opportunity for the company could hit $500 billion. Third Point's latest disclosure firm shows a stake of 5.5 million shares in the entertainment giant, which, as of Aug. 17, were valued at about $715 million. — ALEX WEPRIN

Beanie Feldstein

FILM

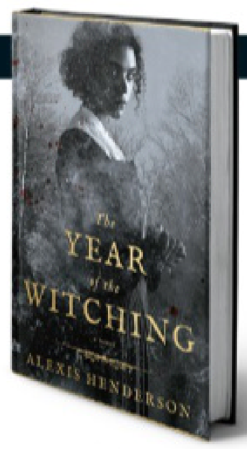
Will Smith (**CAA**) and **Kevin Hart** (**UTA**, **3 Arts**, **Schreck Rose**) will star in a Paramount remake of 1987 John Hughes comedy *Planes, Trains and Automobiles*.

Elisabeth Moss (**WME**, the U.K.'s **Independent**, **Ribisi**, **Hansen Jacobson**) will star in and produce Blumhouse psychological thriller *Mrs. March*.

Amandla Stenberg (**UTA**, **Del Shaw**) has joined Universal Pictures' feature adaptation of Tony-winning musical *Dear Evan Hansen*.

Jill Scott (**ICM**, **Maverick**, **Morris Yorn**) will play queen of gospel Mahalia Jackson in biopic *Mahalia!*, exec produced by Jamie Foxx and Queen Latifah, following Danielle Brooks' casting in a separate biopic for Lifetime.

Rights Available! Hot new books with Hollywood appeal BY MIA GALUPPO



The Year of the Witching (PENGUIN PUBLISHING, JULY 21)

BY **Alexis Henderson** AGENCY **UTA**

With the upcoming *Craft* reboot and popular series like Netflix's *Sabrina*, Hollywood is having a witchcraft resurgence. Henderson's book tackles sexism and racism, following an ostracized young woman in a puritanical society as she discovers her powers.

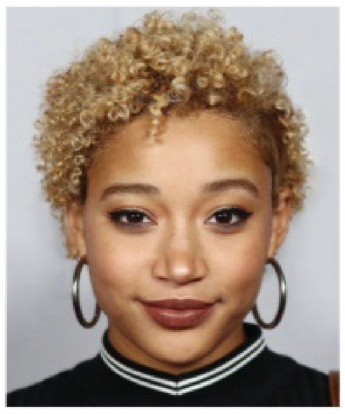
Hurry Home (CROOKED LANE BOOKS, JULY 7)

BY **Roz Nay** AGENCY **Transatlantic Agency**

This popcorn family mystery, told through alternating POV, centers on estranged sisters, one a successful social worker in an idyllic resort town and the other pregnant and penniless. Thrown together again after a decade, they unravel each other's secrets.

PEELE: FRAZER HARRISON/GETTY IMAGES. RUSSO: MICHAEL KOVAC/GETTY IMAGES. CHAPEK: RICHARD HARBAUGH/DISNEYLAND RESORT VIA GETTY IMAGES. YOSHIDA: JOHN SCIULLI/GETTY IMAGES. ELBA: GREGG DEGUIRE/WIREIMAGE. SMITH: GABRIEL BOUYS/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES. MACFARLANE, LOEB: JON KOPALOFF/GETTY IMAGES. STENBERG: GABRIEL OLSEN/GETTY IMAGES. DEBICKI: MARK SAGLIOCCO/GETTY IMAGES. FELDSTEIN: LARS NIKI/GETTY IMAGES. HOME: MOVOTO. COOPER: NBC. BOOK: COURTESY OF PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE. SHAKIRA: CARLOS ALVAREZ/GETTY IMAGES.

MacFarlane


Stenberg

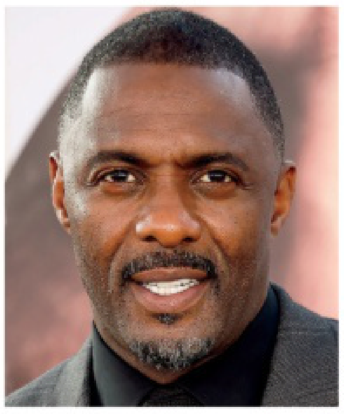
Smith

Debicki

$610M

Big Number

Sale price of Ryan Reynolds' Aviation American Gin brand to alcoholic beverage giant Diageo, with $335 million up front.


Elba

Harry and Meghan's new home has a library and home theater.

Leonardo DiCaprio's (**LBI**, **Hansen Jacobson**) film and TV production company Appian Way has inked a multiyear first-look feature film deal with Sony Pictures Entertainment.

The Farewell's **Lulu Wang** (**UTA**, **Circle of Confusion**, **Morris Yorn**) will direct a reimagining of Hirokazu Kore-eda's Japanese family drama *Like Father, Like Son* for Focus Features.

Roxane Gay (**WME**, **Ginsburg Daniels**) will adapt and exec produce a feature film based on her graphic novel *The Banks* for TKO Studios and Macro.

Blindspotting producer **Snoot Entertainment** will team with video game developer Campo Santo for a film version of *Firewatch*.

TELEVISION

Seth MacFarlane (**Joy Fehily**, **Jackoway Austen**) is adapting Herman Wouk's *The Winds of War* and *War and Remembrance* as a limited series for Universal Content Productions.

The Old Guard director **Gina Prince-Bythewood** and husband **Reggie Rock-Bythewood** (**CAA**, **Del Shaw**) have signed a multiyear, first-look deal with Disney's Touchstone TV.

DIGITAL

Elizabeth Debicki (**CAA**, Australia's **United**) will play Princess Diana in the fifth and sixth seasons of Netflix's *The Crown*.

Tig Notaro (**ICM**, **Integral**, **Ziffren Brittenham**) has replaced Chris D'Elia in Zack Snyder's Netflix zombie movie *Army of the Dead*.

Idris Elba (**WME**, the U.K.'s **Artists Partnership**, **Ziffren Brittenham**) will star in and produce an untitled romantic spy thriller from Simon Kinberg for Apple.

Daniel Kaluuya (**CAA**, **Management 360**) will star in and produce Netflix sci-fi feature *The Upper World*.

Reese Witherspoon (**CAA**, **LBI**, **Hansen Jacobson**) will exec produce country music competition series *My Kind of Country* for Apple TV+.

Beanie Feldstein (**WME**, **Linden**, **Gang Tyre**), **Jane Lynch** (**WME**, **Hansen Jacobson**) and **Lacey Chabert** (**Innovative**, **Thruline**, **Felker Toczek**) will lead the voice cast for Apple TV+ animated series *Harriet the Spy*.

Jordan Reddout and **Gus Hickey** (**Paradigm**) are writing a *Clueless* reboot series centered on Dionne (Stacey Dash in the 1995 movie) for Peacock.

Kenya Barris (**CAA**, **Artists First**, **Morris Yorn**) will produce a feature documentary for Netflix about Benjamin Crump, a civil rights attorney who represents the families of victims of police violence.

Jensen Ackles (**Gersh**, **Management 360**, **Ziffren Brittenham**) has joined the third season of Amazon's *The Boys*.

Hulu has picked up Sarah Paulson horror thriller *Run* from Lionsgate. ... **HBO Max** has picked up *The Other Two* and *South Side* from Comedy Central.

BOOKS

Sharon Stone (**CAA**, **Mosaic**) will release memoir *The Beauty of Living Twice*, published by Alfred A. Knopf, in March 2021.

Rep Sheet

Grammy-winning pop star **Shakira** has signed with **WME**.

Jericka Duncan, a CBS News national correspondent, has signed with **CAA**.

Rapper **Tyga** has signed with **UTA** ahead of a new album release this fall.

Record producer **Tokimonsta** has left Paradigm and signed with **WME**.

Damian Hurley, son of Elizabeth Hurley, has signed with **IMG Models**.

Next Big Thing

Sarah Cooper

REPS WME, AGI, Morris Yorn

WHY SHE MATTERS
The comedian, who has gone viral on TikTok for her **Donald Trump** impersonations, has landed a Netflix comedy special, directed by **Natasha Lyonne**, who also executive produces, alongside **Maya Rudolph**. Previously a writer and correspondent on **Stephen Colbert**'s *Old News* pilot, Cooper will dive into politics, race, gender and class in the special.

REAL ESTATE

Prince Harry and **Meghan Markle** have purchased a nine-bedroom, 16-bathroom estate in Montecito for $14.7 million.

Lori Loughlin and **Mossimo Giannulli** (**The Agency**) have downsized to a six-bedroom home in Hollywood Hills, bought for $9.5 million.

Annapurna Pictures' **Megan Ellison** (**Hilton & Hyland**) sold her historic Van Griffith estate in Loz Feliz to venture capitalist **Blake Bartlett** for $8.3 million.

Courteney Cox has sold her one-bedroom condo in West Hollywood's Sierra Towers for $2.9 million.

— COMPILED BY KIRSTEN CHUBA

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Creative Producing

Behind the scenes on the set of *Where We Go*.
Directed by Christina Yoon and produced
by Jungyoon Kim. Photograph by Linhao Zhang.

arts.columbia.edu/thr

D'Arcy Carden, who often played multiple versions of her *Good Place* character, next stars in Amazon's *A League of Their Own* adaptation.

'HOW LUCKY ARE WE?'

The Emmy-nominated supporting actress of NBC's late *The Good Place* writes about how co-star (and TV veteran) Ted Danson helped her savor her time on her first big gig

BY D'ARCY CARDEN

So often it's only after an extraordinary moment or experience that we realize how extraordinary it actually was. You wish you could go back in time and tell your brain, "Remember this. You will want to look back on this for the rest of your life." The second I was cast on a new Mike Schur show, starring America's sweeties Kristen Bell and Ted Danson, I knew it would be a special experience. I said to myself, "D'Arcy Beth, you have been working for this your entire life, and now it's here. *Remember this*."

I made the decision early on to never take a single day on that set for granted. That was especially so during the fourth season, when we knew it would be our last. All of this was reinforced by getting to know Ted, who seems to appreciate these moments more than most. He's certainly had plenty of them in his lifetime, and somewhere along the way learned to recognize and appreciate them. He would often say, "Aren't we so lucky to be here? Can you believe it?" I couldn't. Still can't.

Remember this: The cast met for the very first time in our new boss Mike's office at Universal. I had been to Universal tons of times — with my parents, in the '90s, on a tram, with a tour guide — so I was only just kind of nervous. Attending this meeting was Mike, executive producer Drew Goddard, my five insanely beautiful new castmates and me. We sat around a coffee table while gorgeous photos of series past looked down on us: Amy Poehler, Steve Carell, Rashida Jones, Rainn Wilson, Andy Samberg — or, as all of our moms call him, "Adam Sanders." It was intimidating and thrilling. Everyone was friendly and lovely and constantly sneaking glances at Ted. After the meeting ended, the professional adults left, and the newbies (Manny Jacinto, William Jackson Harper, Jameela Jamil and me) stood outside Mike's office and waited for a PA (!) to come pick us up in a golf cart (!!). The four of us looked at each other, eyes wild and jaws on the ground. We huddled up to exchange squeals and phone numbers. Our lives were about to change.

Remember this: The last night of filming season one, we filmed *that* scene. Everyone was starting to feel sad. Our first, perfect season was coming to an end. It's like the last night at sleepaway camp. It's still so much fun — I mean, you probably have the talent show! — but you're very aware that when the morning comes, you'll have to pack your bags and your stepdad Greg will be there to take you home. At that point, we had no idea if people would like the show or if we'd even get a second season. It was certainly possible that this could be our last night working together. I remember Ted asked for another take of that "This is the bad place" moment. "Lemme try something," he said. On his next take, he added that devilish giggle, and the molecules in the room changed. It was electric. Everyone knew that was the one.

Remember this: On our final day of filming, we shot in a Redwood forest in Northern California. It was breathtaking. The characters saying goodbye to each other as we, real people, said goodbye to each other was almost too much to bear. I could hardly get through a take without tearing up. I remember every minute of that day. Driving to the location in the van with the other actors early that morning, we decided to recount the first time each of us had met and tell the story. It was sweet. There was a lot of hugging, a lot of hand-holding and "I love you's." Even though I knew I would see him the very next day at an event, it's hard to explain the feeling of sorrow I had when I heard the words "That is a series wrap on Ted Danson." Each wrap was a tiny death, but that first one was devastating for all involved. The day couldn't have been more perfect. Ted said it the same way he had said it season one: "Look at all of this. How lucky are we?"

Hmm … I meant to write a funny thing, but instead I wrote a sad thing — because the truth is, I am sad. I'm sad about that wonderful experience being over. I'm sad that I don't get to go to that amazing job with my friends. Getting to be a part of that show was my wildest dream come true. It was my … wait … don't make me write it. Please, I beg you. Do not make me. OK, fine: *It was my good place*. Sorry, it's true. At least I have my memories.

Carden is a first-time Emmy nominee.

GOOD: COLLEEN HAYES/NBC. CARDEN: JON KOPALOFF/GETTY IMAGES.

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EDITOR

OSMANY RODRIGUEZ
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For more information about The Los Angeles Film School and the Spotlight Awards,
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Important information about the educational debt, earnings, and completion rates of students who attended this school can be found at: lafilm.edu/disclosures.

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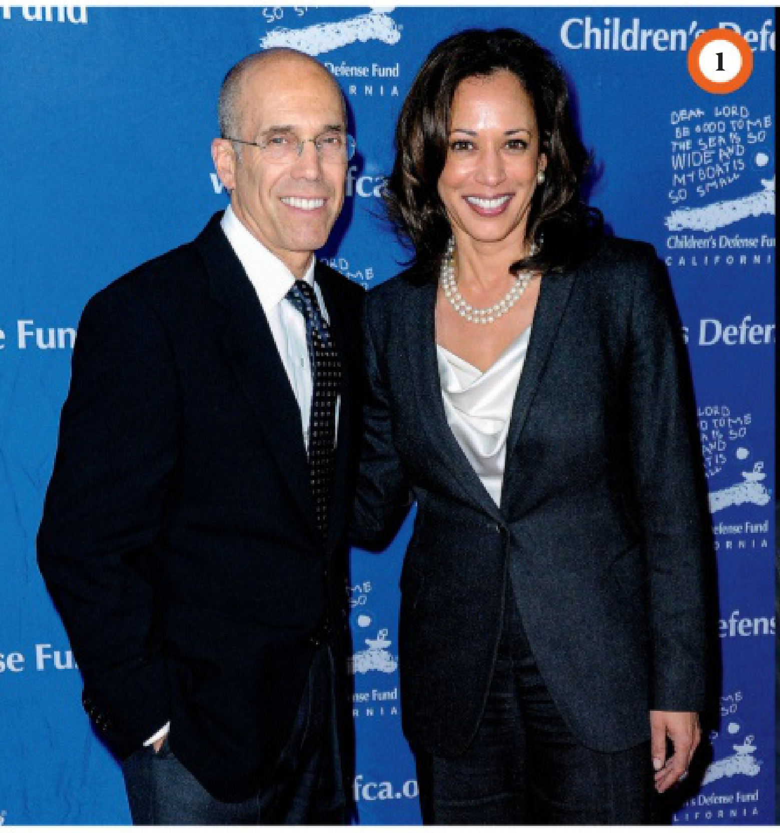
Credit: The Red Maw by Benny Curwen, VFS 3D Animation & Visual Effects, 2020

About Town

People, Places, Preoccupations



1 Kamala Harris — who has long-standing ties to the entertainment industry — with Jeffrey Katzenberg, at a Children's Defense Fund benefit in 2011. **2** With Sean Penn at a Haiti fundraiser in 2013. **3** From left: Sen. Cory Booker, Harris and Anthony Anderson at the 2019 NAACP Image Awards. **4** Cooking masala dosa with Mindy Kaling at the actress' home last year.

Kamala Harris as VP Choice Electrifies Industry Supporters

Joe Biden's selection of the California senator as his running mate sparks joy in the entertainment world, which will be a key source of campaign dollars: 'Hollywood knows a star when we see one'

By Kirsten Chuba

History was made Aug. 11 when **Joe Biden** announced California Sen. **Kamala Harris** as his 2020 running mate, making her both the first Black woman and the first Asian American woman selected as vice president on a major party ticket, as well as the first Californian on a Democratic ticket.

Hollywood was quickly on board, with her many A-list supporters — including **Spike Lee**, **Viola Davis**, **John Legend**, **Elizabeth Banks** and **Jennifer Garner** — celebrating the choice on social media. **Ava DuVernay** Instagrammed: "there is no debate anymore ... we either make this happen or literally, more of us perish."

Pose star **Angelica Ross** posted that Harris is "the right choice for this moment" and recounted personal conversations she'd had with the politician over her record with trans people and nonviolent offenders during her tenure as California attorney general. "She recognized where she could do better, and I feel like anytime we have politicians who are able to listen, receive critiques and vow to do better, those are people that we should be working with," Ross tells *THR*. She hopes Hollywood shows Harris the same support: "I believe that we are entering into a time that is going to use every tool possible to try to tear this Black woman down."

The Gotham Group CEO **Ellen Goldsmith-Vein**, a longtime supporter with husband **Jon Vein**, tells *THR*, "There should be no doubt that women of color, Black women in particular, are the foundation of the Democratic Party and the future of leadership."

Matt Johnson, a talent lawyer at Ziffren Brittenham, has been Team Harris since 2010, when he and his wife, **Yasmine**, hosted the first L.A. fundraiser for her attorney general run. A decade later, they plan to be just as active.

"We will host fundraisers, recruit surrogates, make calls and get out the vote," Johnson says. "Over the years we've had many private conversations and thoughtful debates with Kamala. We have witnessed just how spot-on her instincts are for where our country is headed and what needs to happen."

The Contender director **Rod Lurie**, whose 2000 film featured a fictional first female veep, feels there are parallels to the role **Joan Allen** played in the movie. "It is essential," he explains, "for there to be no chinks in the armor, because otherwise people just fall all over the female politicians in a way that's kind of grotesque." He also looks forward to her facing off with current Vice President **Mike Pence**, like "**Sigourney Weaver** or a tough **Halle Berry** from *John Wick*, going up against the bad guy from *Raiders of the Lost Ark*."

As the Biden-Harris campaign picks up steam in the coming weeks — it raised $48 million in the 48 hours after the vp announcement alone — Hollywood will be a likely point of focus.

During her presidential run, Harris, who owns a home in Brentwood, was the candidate most favored by top entertainment power

BIDEN HARRIS

Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden and Sen. Harris at their first press conference Aug. 12.

KATZENBERG: FRAZER HARRISON/GETTY IMAGES. PENN: ALBERTO E. RODRIGUEZ/GETTY IMAGES. ANDERSON: PARAS GRIFFIN/GETTY IMAGES. BIDEN: OLIVIER DOULIERY/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES.

players, accounting for 48 percent of donations made by members of *THR*'s Top 100 list as of July 2019. Harris' husband, **Doug Emhoff**, is an entertainment lawyer with DLA Piper. And in L.A., her inner circle of confidants includes a who's who of powerful women.

Longtime friend **Chrisette Hudlin**, wife of producer **Reginald Hudlin**, introduced Harris to Emhoff, and the senator is godmother to one of the couple's children. Other close supporters are **Laura Shell**, wife of NBCUniversal CEO **Jeff Shell**; **Katie Abrams**, co-head of Bad Robot; former U.S. Ambassador **Nicole Avant**, wife of Netflix boss **Ted Sarandos**; Universal Filmed Entertainment Group chair **Donna Langley**; producer **Julia Franz**, wife of ICM Partners managing director **Chris Silbermann**; Disney TV Studios and ABC Entertainment chairman **Dana Walden** (who was a donor to Harris' first race for San Francisco district attorney in 2003); Amazon Studios head **Jen Salke**; and Chuck Lorre Family Foundation president **Trisha Cardoso**.

For Hollywood supporters, two of the top points of contact inside the Biden campaign are political consultant **Ryan Baukol**, the Southern California and Nevada regional finance director, and **Michelle Kwan**, the Olympic silver and bronze medalist figure skater turned political operative, who directs appearances by surrogates.

Philanthropist Laura Wasserman with Harris at LACMA's 2014 Art + Film Gala.

Harris appeared with actress Yara Shahidi at the United State of Women Summit in 2018 in Los Angeles.

Highlighting Hollywood's importance in the election, Harris will hold her first solo vp event of the campaign with a fundraiser co-chaired by Avant and former U.S. Ambassador **Colleen Bell**, director of the California Film Commission, along with **Mindy Kaling**, **Reese Witherspoon**, **Shonda Rhimes**, **Mai Lassiter** (wife of producer **James Lassiter**) and **Shannon Rotenberg**, executive director of **Matthew McConaughey**'s Just Keep Livin Foundation. The event, which has a top ticket price of $100,000, benefits the Biden Victory Fund, a joint fundraising effort of the Biden campaign, the Democratic National Committee and state parties.

"Whoever the nominee, we were prepared to gather people from all over the country to show our enthusiastic support. Now the vp candidate is Kamala — who [Nicole Avant and I] have both known for many years — so this is very exciting," Bell says.

Adds Johnson, "Hollywood knows a star when we see one. This town trades in story arcs all day. We know the power of heroism and adversity. The world knows who the good guys — and women — are in this story, and we will work together to celebrate a Biden-Harris victory in November." THR

Make Note: Hollywood's Political Calendar

Hollywood Is Raising Arizona

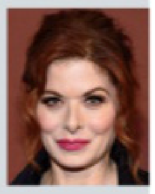
Aug. 21, *fieldteam6.org*

Co-hosted by **Vin Di Bona** and **Nigel Lythgoe**, the Zoom game show event benefits Democratic group Field Team 6 to register Arizona students and purged voters.

Conversation on the Value of Women Voters and Leaders

Aug. 26, *secure.joebiden.com/a/0826-women-voters*

An official Biden event moderated by **Debra Messing** and **Eric McCormack**.


Messing

Has America Jumped the Shark?

Aug. 27, *fieldteam6.org*

The event — a "writers' panel discussing how if 2020 was a [political] TV show, the writers would have been fired for making it unrealistic," says Field Team 6's **Jason Berlin** — features *Veep*'s **Dave Mandel**, *Samantha Bee*'s **Ashley Nicole Black** and *The Simpsons*' **Al Jean**.

Black National Convention

Aug. 28, *m4bl.org*

"Oftentimes, I feel the DNC has taken the Black vote, especially Black women, for granted," says **Angelica Ross**, who will host the BNC, a partnership with the Movement for Black Lives to focus on ratifying a Black political agenda.

Blue Momentum PAC

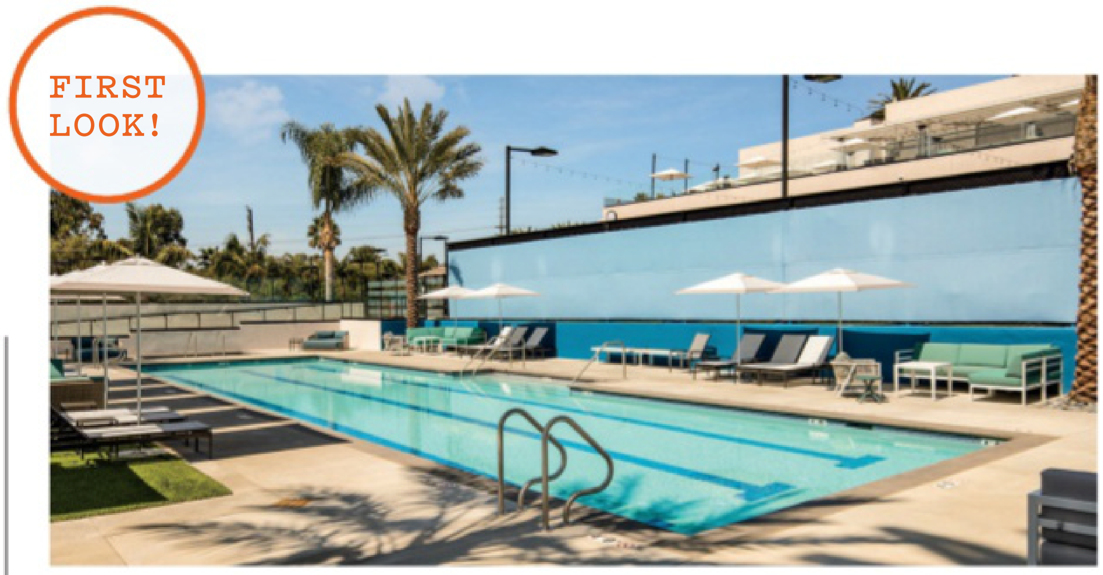
Aug. 31, *secure.actblue.com/donate/po?refcode=8.11*

A Zoom conversation between **Patton Oswalt** and Rep. **Ted Lieu**.

A PRIVATE CLUB'S PANDEMIC PIVOTS

L.A.'s Griffin Club reopened with outdoor exercise equipment and dining and has just unveiled a new pool: 'We have a lot of outdoor space' By Degen Pener

FIRST LOOK!


The new junior Olympic-size pool at the Griffin Club in Cheviot Hills.

The Griffin Club, which debuted in Cheviot Hills in 2015, reopened June 1 with more than a few changes in response to the novel coronavirus pandemic.

Originally founded in 1926 as the Westside Tennis Club, the 4-acre club — whose ranks throughout its history have included everyone from **Errol Flynn** and **Humphrey Bogart** to **Ty Burrell** and **Josh Gad** — has launched a new app so that members can book dedicated and socially distanced time slots for swimming and tennis. Exercise equipment has been moved outside. Masks are required on the property.

While indoor dining at its clubhouse is shut down, meal service is offered on a 5,000-square-foot terrace. One of the most in-demand facilities is the pool, which is being booked at half-capacity for two-hour slots. With about 1,700 members, the Griffin charges initiation fees ranging from $2,000 to $14,000.

Now, responding to increased interest in swimming, the club (originally founded by **Milton Berle**'s uncle, **Elmer**) has rushed to open a second pool, with an emphasis on lap swimming. "It's primarily focused for adults and will be more of a quiet place," says the Griffin's director of membership, **John Myers**, who adds, "As opposed to like a Soho House, we have a lot of outdoor space." THR

WASSERMAN: RICH POLK/GETTY IMAGES FOR LACMA. SHAHIDI: RODIN ECKENROTH/GETTY IMAGES. MESSING: JAMIE MCCARTHY/GETTY IMAGES. GRIFFIN: COURTESY OF SUBJECT.

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The U.S. media industry has promoted smoking for generations, knowing the chronic misery and death it causes. COVID-19 is a good time to stop.

We've known for years that smoking on screen recruits millions to smoke. Now, we know that young people who smoke and vape are more likely to become infected with COVID-19 and that smokers hospitalized with COVID-19 are more likely to deteriorate, even to die. As U.S. infections skew younger, Hollywood must stop making matters worse.

TOBACCO ON SCREEN: Change since 2015

	INCIDENTS	EXPOSURES*
AT&T	+130%	+391%
Comcast	+74%	-58%
Disney	-67%	-62%
Sony	+183%	+661%
ViacomCBS	+347%	+395%
Indies	+155%	+203%
TOTAL	+108%	+155%

* Through 2019, domestic in-theater audience exposures from all MPA ratings.

In recent years, Hollywood has stubbornly increased its tobacco burden, not reduced it.

Despite company policies that were supposed to discourage smoking, tobacco imagery in PG/PG-13 films has grown by more than 60 percent since 2015. Tobacco incidents in R-rated films—freely available to young viewers on major VOD services—have *more than doubled*.

Media execs have repeatedly ignored public health advice. They can't afford to.

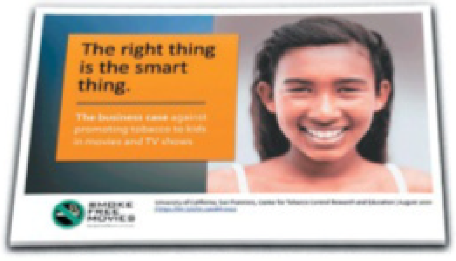
After smoking commercials were banned on America's airwaves fifty years ago, Hollywood and Big Tobacco kept on collaborating. Shareholders, state Attorneys General and top U.S. health authorities have repeatedly warned that tobacco-contaminated media are fueling a public health catastrophe—a threat amplified by the coronavirus pandemic cresting across the United States. The industry has a choice: make COVID-19 worse or make America safer.

Tobacco remains the world's leading cause of preventable death. It's time to prevent it.

Since 2015, U.S. films have delivered 82 billion tobacco exposures to domestic moviegoers of all ages. According to preliminary estimates, the rest of the world gets *four times* that toxic dose. In self-defense, some of the world's top growth markets, including China, India and Nigeria, are adopting explicit on-screen tobacco warnings and other measures backed by WHO's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. What nations will be next?

Your recovery plan can protect your brand AND the health of your young audiences.

To help you do the right thing and the smart thing, we've put together the business case for cutting kids' on-screen tobacco exposure and giving parents advance warning. The package includes policy proposals from investors who manage assets worth billions.



The right thing is the smart thing.

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smokefreemovies.ucsf.edu

Yes, I Did Say That!

A look at who's saying what in entertainment

Compiled by Michael O'Connell

"Oh, shit."

MAYA RUDOLPH
The actress, in *Entertainment Weekly*, reacting to news that presidential candidate Joe Biden's vp pick is Sen. Kamala Harris — whom Rudolph spoofed on *SNL* and is now expected to do so again ahead of the election.

"I'll do anything to prove that theaters can reopen safe."

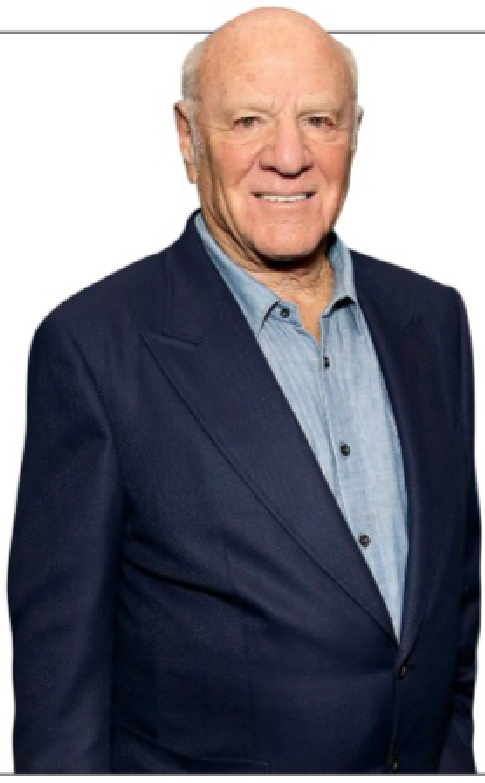
ANDREW LLOYD WEBBER
The 72-year-old composer, on Twitter, announcing he'd volunteered to participate in Oxford University's COVID-19 vaccine trial.

"It's been gratifying to see the idea of 'stick to sports' kind of have a very short life."

JEMELE HILL
The journalist, in *UPROXX*, acknowledging that 2020 has made it easier for athletes to talk about politics — two years after her criticism of the NFL caused a rift with her former employer ESPN.

"All of the rest of them are caddies on a golf course they'll never play."

BARRY DILLER
The media mogul, in *The New York Times*, describing The Walt Disney Co. as the only entertainment brand immune to the wave of executive streamlining and consolidations.



"We've decided to attack things head on."

DAN FOGELMAN
The showrunner, on Twitter, confirming that *This Is Us* would lean into the novel coronavirus during its upcoming fifth season.

"Don't be a dumbass."

DOLLY PARTON
The singer, in *Billboard*, addressing any potential critics of her decision to endorse the Black Lives Matter movement and drop the word "Dixie" from her Tennessee theme park.

"Not when it comes to business."

MARK CUBAN
The *Shark Tank* personality, responding to a question about whether Donald Trump has ever been "insightful" in the years that he's known him.

"I thought it was gonna change the world."

JASON DERULO
The *Cats* actor, in *The Telegraph*, explaining that he had every faith in his lambasted movie — even as the trailers sparked widespread mockery.

FLASHBACK! Did I Really Say That?

JAN. 4, 2019

"The world is ending and I honestly don't understand the law that says you have to be older to vote."

BILLIE EILISH
The singer, to *NME*, insisting that all teenagers should be allowed to participate in U.S. elections as they're more affected by them than older voters who are "going to die soon." Now 18, she's among the youngest set to appear at the virtual Democratic National Convention.

RUDOLPH: RACHEL MURRAY/GETTY IMAGES. DILLER: MONICA SCHIPPER/GETTY IMAGES. PARTON: KEVIN MAZUR/GETTY IMAGES. DERULO: STEVEN FERDMAN/GETTY IMAGES. EILISH: TONY BARSON/WIREIMAGE.

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Top row, from left: Steve Martin, Sarah Silverman and Mel Brooks; second row: Rob Reiner, Carl Reiner and Billy Crystal; third row: the Clintons, Norman Lear and Dick Van Dyke.

Rambling Reporter

By Chris Gardner

Hundreds Tune In for Private Carl Reiner Tribute

Carl Reiner, who died June 29 at age 98, received an all-star sendoff during a private memorial Aug. 9. Multiple attendees confirmed to *THR* that a who's who of friends, family and comedy collaborators attended the 450-person Zoom tribute that also was live-streamed. Set up by son **Rob Reiner**, the program featured **Dick Van Dyke**, who toplined the Carl-created *Dick Van Dyke Show*; **Mel Brooks**, a friend for seven decades who co-created their iconic comic routine, *The 2,000-Year-Old Man*; **Bill** and **Hillary Clinton**; **Norman Lear**; **Albert Brooks**; Carl's manager **George Shapiro**; **Billy Crystal**; **Sarah Silverman**; **Audra MacDonald**; and **Steve Martin**. Family members including Carl's other children, **Annie** and **Lucas Reiner**, also offered words. An attendee says that both Mel's and Albert's remarks were especially amazing and that Martin was "brilliant." A rep for Rob Reiner did not respond to a request for comment.

Harry Shearer Tackles Trump on New Album

Shearer did mo-cap to become Trump.

On July 23, *Simpsons* voice legend **Harry Shearer** dropped a music video on YouTube titled "Son in Law." Shearer sings, acts and does a shimmy dance — but as **President Trump**. Accomplished with motion-capture animation by Sydney-based Electric Lens Co.'s **Matt Hermans** and MOD Studio's **Michela Ledwidge**, Shearer's Trump holds a news conference and walks across the White House lawn. The video of "Trump" saluting his senior adviser and son-in-law **Jared Kushner** is the first of a planned weekly drop of satirical songs from Shearer's upcoming album, *The Many Moods of Donald Trump*. "In accordance with President Trump's desire to be watched every single moment of every day, I have been watching," Shearer explains. "The satirist's job is to make fun of people in power."

From left: Lauren E. Banks; Breonna Taylor's boyfriend Kenneth Walker; Taylor's sister, Juniyah Palmer; and Until Freedom's Tamika Mallory.

Arrested Actress Continues Breonna Taylor Protests

On Aug. 14, **Lauren E. Banks**, who stars on Showtime's *City on a Hill* opposite **Aldis Hodge**, flew to Louisville a month after getting arrested in the Kentucky city while protesting the murder of **Breonna Taylor.** Banks was among the 87 protesters — now known as the Louisville 87 — handcuffed on the lawn of state Attorney General **Daniel Cameron** during a march organized by social justice group Until Freedom. Taylor, 26, was in bed March 13 when Louisville police accessed her home through a "no-knock" warrant and fired multiple rounds, killing her. The officers have yet to face charges, and her death has inspired widespread protests and a renewed #SayHerName movement. Though the Louisville 87 initially were charged with a felony, calls to drop those charges have been successful. Banks is due back in court in October on trespassing and disorderly conduct charges, but the purpose of her latest trip is to help people still protesting by handing out 500 meals a week, participating in a back-to-school drive and ramping up an arts and activism camp. "We're encouraging people to come back and protest and get in good trouble on behalf of Breonna Taylor," says Banks, noting she'll be returning frequently. "We will continue to say her name every chance we get."

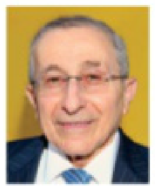
Matthew McConaughey Puts Millions to Sleep

"How often do we feel … filled with gratitude for the mystery and the beauty … of this life?" That's what **Matthew McConaughey** drawls as he opens narration on "Wonder," a Calm app Sleep Story. The Oscar winner lent a voice to the app two years ago, but it's resonating more so now. During a recent Lincoln Motor Co.-hosted wellness panel, Calm head of mindfulness **Tamara Levitt** said the star's bedtime story has been listened to "more than 11 million times" since its 2018 debut: "We've definitely seen an uptick in our usage" since the pandemic, she noted. Others voicing stories include **LeBron James** and **Harry Styles.** THR

Matthew McConaughey

MLK in 1968 protesting with religious leaders.

Social Action



Hier

"Like many nonprofits, we have been devastated," says Rabbi **Marvin Hier** of COVID-19's impact on the Simon Wiesenthal Center. "In the midst of a pandemic, the one thing that hasn't stopped is hate and anti-Semitism. How in such a climate could we still reach our members?" The answer for a "new format in fundraising" came from the center's archives: unpublished speeches delivered in 1980 by trustees **Frank Sinatra** and **Elizabeth Taylor**; a signed image of **Martin Luther King Jr.** with text from his 1963 "I Have a Dream" and 1964 Nobel Peace Prize speeches; letters from **Albert Einstein** protesting the Nazi regime; photos of **David Ben-Gurion**'s 1948 declaration establishing the state of Israel; and other historical ephemera. Costs range from one piece for $1,800 or a full set for $10,000.

Got tips? Email **rambling@thr.com**

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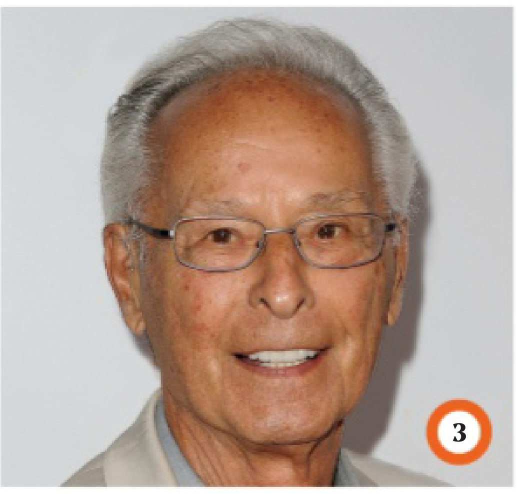


1 Jacob Andreou and Carly Steel **2** Benjamin Zachary Schiff **3** Tony Charmoli

Hitched, Hatched, Hired

Inside the industry's celebrations and news

Weddings

Carly Steel, an Emmy-winning *Entertainment Tonight* correspondent, married **Jacob Andreou,** vp product at Snapchat, on June 27 at Beverly Hills Presbyterian Church in a ceremony for immediate family only. The couple honeymooned in Amangiri, Utah.

Ward

Births

Will Ward, head of the commercials department at WME, and wife **Alana Ward** welcomed **Beau Otis Ward** on June 20 in Los Angeles.

Jacob Schiff, a scripted TV agent at CAA, and wife **Anna Schiff** welcomed son **Benjamin Zachary Schiff** on June 30 at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles.

Chris Pratt and **Katherine Schwarzenegger Pratt** announced the birth of their daughter **Lyla Maria Schwarzenegger Pratt** on Instagram Aug. 10.

Congrats

Jessica Holscott was tapped to head WarnerMedia's studios and networks group finance team Aug. 11.

Marie Moore was named senior vp communications for Warner Bros. global kids, young adults and classics division Aug. 14.

Zack Conroy joined production company 2.0 Entertainment as senior vp finance and operations Aug. 11.

Sarah Chase joined Wild Bill Creative Agency as COO and executive producer Aug. 12.

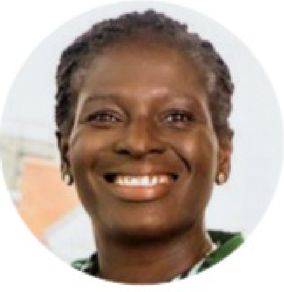
MLB deputy commissioner of business & media **Tony Petitti** joined Activision Blizzard as president of sports & entertainment Aug. 10.

Sonia Chopra was named executive editor of Condé Nast lifestyle unit Bon Appétit on Aug. 6.

Ali Sar was promoted to president of the Hollywood Foreign Press Association on Aug. 7, replacing the late Lorenzo Soria.

Axel Duroux was named CEO of Luc Besson's EuropaCorp, effective Sept. 1.

Yosef Johnson was named president of mobile video publisher Group Nine's in-house branded content studio Brandshop on Aug. 14.



Rawcliffe

ITV director of creative diversity **Ade Rawcliffe** was promoted to group director of diversity and inclusion Aug. 13.

Banijay U.K. named **Peter Salmon** executive chairman and **Lucinda Hicks** U.K. CEO on Aug. 11.

Samantha Prete was promoted to account executive at Falco Ink on Aug. 4.

Edward Sylvan was named president of the Monaco International Film Festival on Aug. 10.

NBCUniversal Telemundo Enterprises upped **Monica Gil** to executive vp, chief administrative and marketing officer, and **Ana Siegel** to executive vp, general counsel, July 29.

Deaths

Tony Charmoli, the three-time Emmy-winning choreographer and Broadway veteran, died Aug. 10 in the Hollywood Hills. He was 99.

Trini López, the singer and guitarist behind the hit songs "If I Had a Hammer" and "Lemon Tree," died of COVID-19 complications in Palm Springs on Aug. 11. He was 83.

George Christy, who wrote a gossip and party column for *The Hollywood Reporter* for more than 26 years, died Aug. 11 of heart failure in Santa Monica. He was 93.

Birthdays

AUG. 19
Melissa Fumero, 38
Manny Jacinto, 33 →
Matthew Perry, 51

AUG. 20
Amy Adams, 46
Andrew Garfield, 37
Al Roker, 66

AUG. 21
Bo Burnham, 30
Hayden Panettiere, 31

AUG. 22
James Corden, 42
Kristen Wiig, 47

AUG. 23
Andrew Rannells, 42

AUG. 24
Dave Chappelle, 47

AUG. 25
Tim Burton, 62
Blake Lively, 33

To submit, send email to **hhh@thr.com**

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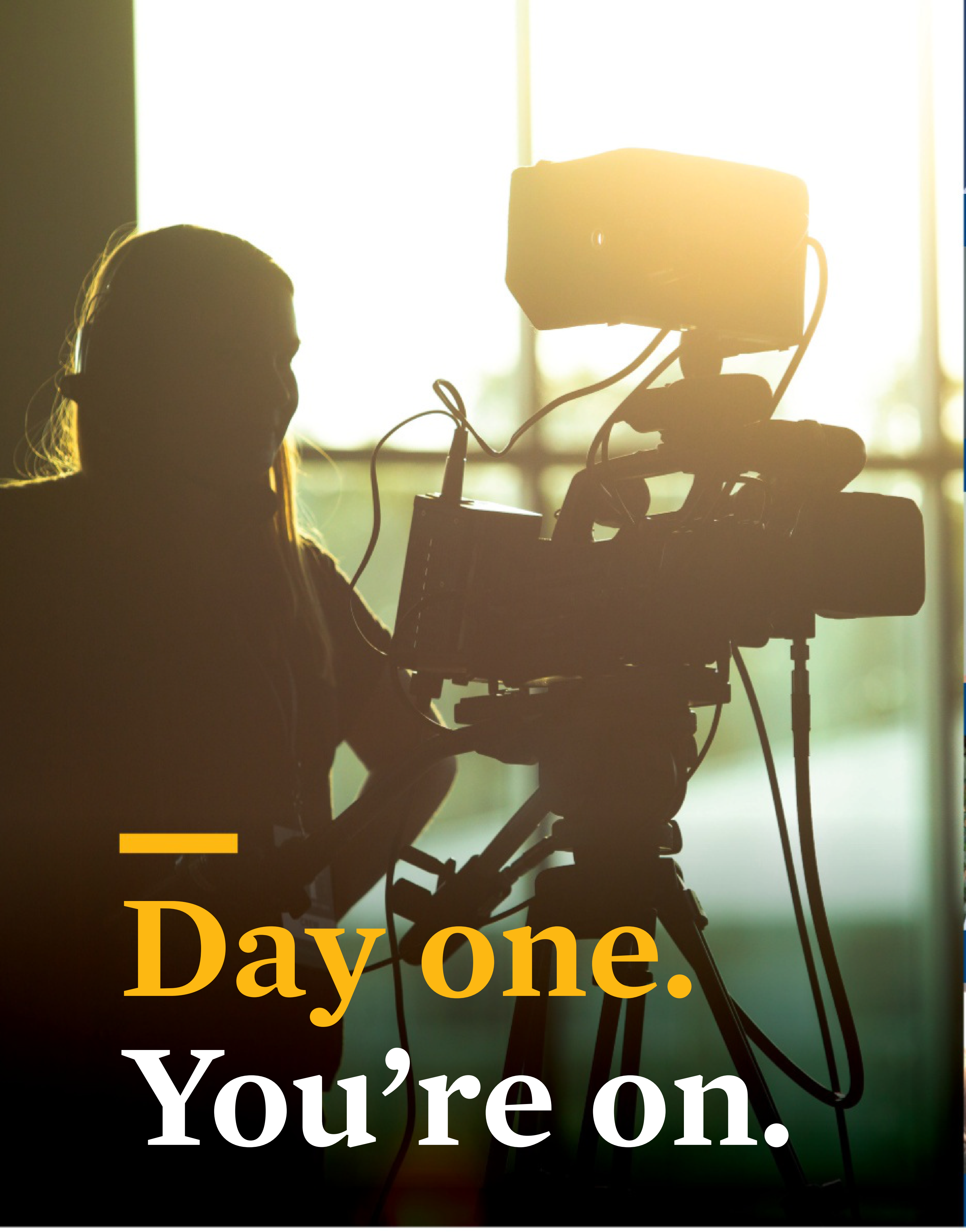

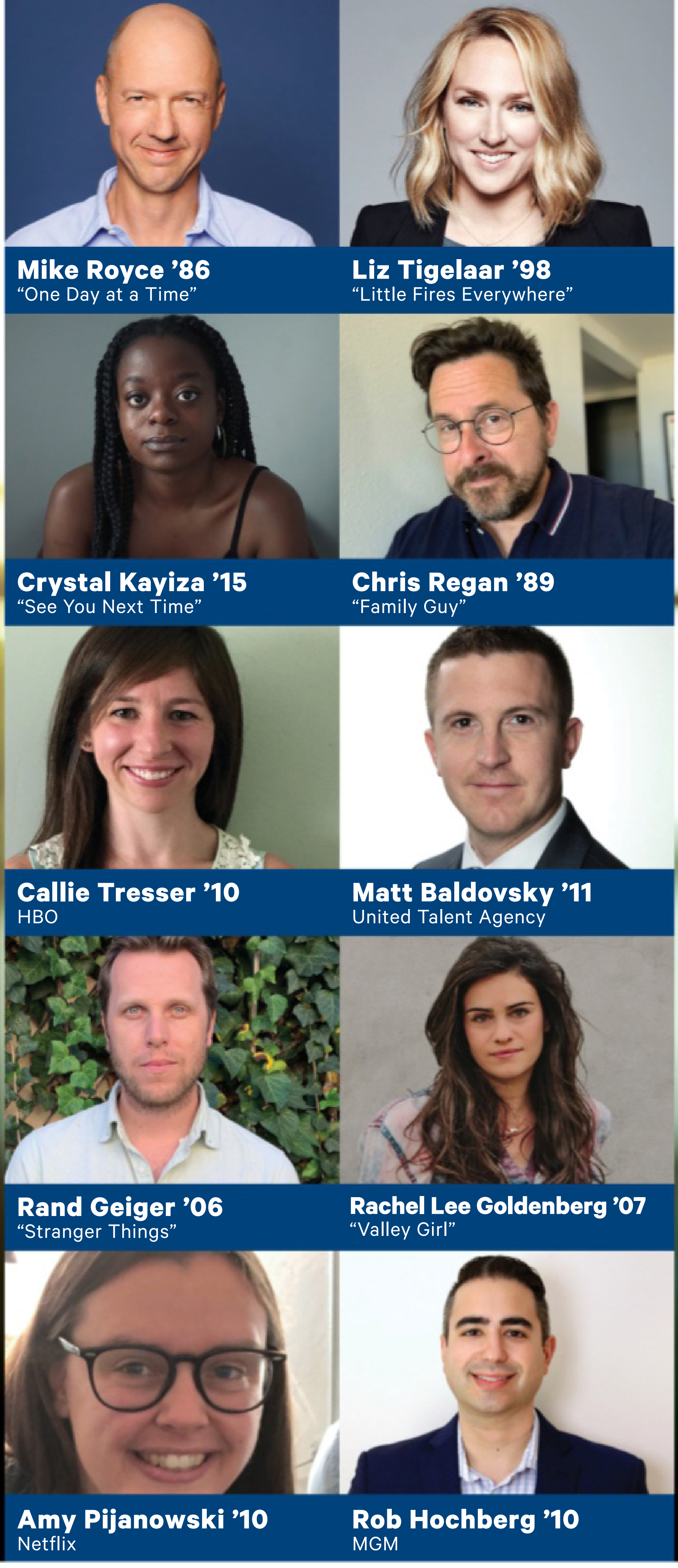

Mike Royce ’86
“One Day at a Time”

Liz Tigelaar ’98
“Little Fires Everywhere”

Crystal Kayiza ’15
“See You Next Time”

Chris Regan ’89
“Family Guy”

Callie Tresser ’10
HBO

Matt Baldovsky ’11
United Talent Agency

Rand Geiger ’06
“Stranger Things”

Rachel Lee Goldenberg ’07
“Valley Girl”

Amy Pijanowski ’10
Netflix

Rob Hochberg ’10
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The skateboard, from the launch of *Betty*, is a limited edition by artist Jeffrey Cheung. "I can barely stand upright on it," says Gravitt.

Amy Gravitt, who was photographed Aug. 10 in her North Hollywood home office, calls videoconferencing "one of the big revelations" of the pandemic, adding: "It's going to take a whole lot more to get you on a plane when we're all back to traveling."

Amy Gravitt

HBO's comedy chief on WarnerMedia's shake-up, Michaela Coel's future and Hollywood's uncertain path back to humor

By Lacey Rose

Amy Gravitt got her start not in an agency mail room but rather on the USS Constellation. Deployed to the Persian Gulf not long after graduating from Duke University, the Virginia native received an early education in discipline and team-building, to say nothing of a considerably more interesting story to tell once she arrived in Hollywood. And after serving four years in the Navy, the now-46-year-old mom of two made just that move, ultimately settling at HBO in 2004, after a stint at George Clooney's former production company.

A decade and a half later, Gravitt oversees a thriving comedy department — her purview since 2016 — that recently picked up 15 Emmy nominations, spread among *Insecure*, *Curb Your Enthusiasm* and *A Black Lady Sketch Show*. Appearing virtually from her home office in L.A., she opened up about pricey protocols for pandemic production, a shake-up at WarnerMedia and the future of her recent breakout, Michaela Coel's *I May Destroy You*.

You spent four years in the Navy before arriving in Hollywood. How did that experience prepare you?
I was 21 to 25 years old when I was on the carrier, and I needed those years to mature. Being in the Navy, you obviously internalize a certain work ethic fairly quickly. But I grew up in a military family. My dad was a fighter pilot and my brother went to the Naval Academy, so it was the natural course for me. That was the family business. Now, I'm very happy to have that under my belt, but at the time, it was hard. I was on an old aircraft carrier that wasn't retrofit for women. I was one of 10 women and 5,000 men.

Well, that'll certainly prepare you for Hollywood ...
Exactly! (*Laughs.*)

In a commencement address you gave at Duke, you said it gave you a perspective that's served you well in this industry. How so?
There's this tendency now to get started as soon as possible in the entertainment industry, and any time spent outside it is time wasted. What I was trying to

Photographed by **Hussein Katz**

A Navy parting gift, signed by her shipmates, as Gravitt relocated to L.A., where she had college friends and an entry-level gig.

Roll
Scene
Take
VEEP
Season 7
Director: David Mandel
Camera: David Miller, ASC

A signed clapper board from *Veep*'s producers. "It reminds me of the bittersweet last day in the Oval Office set on the Paramount lot," she says.

communicate there is that those four years were my first building blocks. Without them, I don't have this career. Experience outside the industry is still valuable experience. And personally, I'm always interested in a story that I haven't heard before, and I think that's what people respond to with my Navy experience. You don't always sit down for a general [meeting] with an executive who's been deployed to the Persian Gulf. It's a new story, a new conversation.

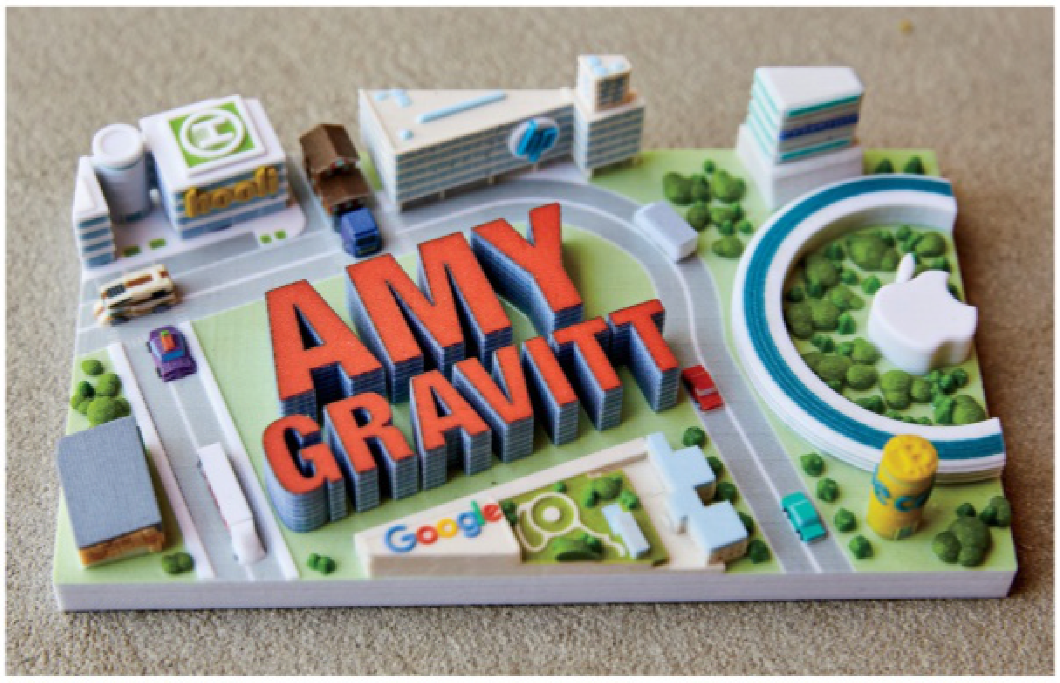
Your first gig out here was working for George Clooney and Steven Soderbergh. You must have a good story from that chapter?
There was definitely the crazy fan mail. George had a pet pig, and there was somebody who'd continually send pig glasses, statues and drawings addressed to the pig. There was also an escalating prank war between George and Jerry Weintraub that landed in our office, and I'll leave it at that.

You're now overseeing HBO's comedy slate, mid-pandemic. Have you discussed with your writers how to tweak stories so they're shootable?
We're not quite there yet. I think everybody knows the general precautions, so they have them in mind, but we haven't yet taken a red line to scenes in a script yet.

When do you foresee being back in production?
When everybody's comfortable and ready to be creative. With comedy, you have the extra bar of going back to work and taking certain precautions and, on top of that, you have to be funny. We want everybody to feel safe enough that they are comfortable delivering comedy. It's also all about chemistry, and if you've been working a certain way, like the *Curb* ensemble has been for years, and all of a sudden you're a few extra feet apart or there's not as many people in the room, how does that affect the show's tone?

All these precautions are going to take more time and money. Are you prepared to up your budgets?
It's money well spent.

Writers haven't slowed. Are you being deluged with new scripts?
Yes, but I have to say, when I have the opportunity to read a script, especially one of ours, it honestly feels like a treat at this point because we've spent so much time talking about the logistics of coming back to work. It's nice to have creative conversations again.



Gravitt has always loved the main titles of *Silicon Valley*, particularly the fact that the details would change each season. This model was from the comedy's final season.

RÉSUMÉ

CURRENT TITLE
executive vp
programming, HBO

PREVIOUS JOB
Navy lieutenant, followed by a stint at George Clooney's Section Eight, where she worked on HBO comedies *K Street* and *Unscripted*.

BIG HIT
Veep, which she oversaw for seven seasons. In that time, it picked up 17 Emmys.

Mid-pandemic, you put out a critical smash, *I May Destroy You*. When did Coel first appear on your radar?
I had a general meeting with her a few years ago. It was after seeing and loving *Chewing Gum*, and in that meeting she told us about the assault [she had endured] in a very raw way and that she was thinking about using it as the seed of an idea for a show. At the time, I thought, "Well, there's no way it's going to be a comedy, so I'll introduce her to Francesca [Orsi, HBO's drama head]." (*Laughs.*) As a showrunner, Michaela knew the difference between an idea and a series, and she knew she needed to do the work both to heal and to turn it into a show that could sustain itself. The process of breaking the series and healing were one in the same for her. When she came back [a few years later], it was a half-hour — still true to her experience but expanded into a [piece] about how we treat one another. I think that's why it's resonating.

Do you envision doing more?
I want to give Michaela the time to digest the process, because it was so personal. But we're all still very energized by the characters and conversations.

With tonal lines blurring, is length the determinant now between what's a drama versus a comedy?
That tends to be how we've done it. *Succession* blurs lines, but it's an hour [so it's a drama]. Comedy has always been able to tackle big themes, but the evolution, to me, is not so much that comedy is getting more dramatic but that it now has its own aesthetic appeal. It can look good. Directors, like Melina [Matsoukas] on *Insecure* or Bill [Hader] with *Barry*, are able to put a stamp on a half-hour without losing that ear for the comedy.

With the recent shake-up, your boss, Casey Bloys, will now oversee HBO Max, too. How will HBO and HBO Max comedies differ?
We [our departments] talk all the time and I know what makes sense for us. We have a history of playing with experimental comedies in the writer-performer space, [like] *Los Espookys*. My slate will always be a balance of those and bigger shows that take on how we live in the world today — be that taking on larger institutions or how we treat one another.

What show do you wish was yours?
Can I say *Succession*? I have across-the-hall envy.

Interview edited for length and clarity.

Analysis

TELEVISION | RICK PORTER

Everyone Is Invited to Play Here

More than half of kids series on major networks and streamers are inclusive, a fact that execs say attracts diverse talent behind the scenes and can 'create loyalty for life' among viewers

When *Doc McStuffins* premiered in 2012 on Disney Channel, its title character was the first Black girl to be front and center in a preschool animated series.

Eight years later, more than half of the current scripted shows on Disney, Nickelodeon and their respective junior channels — both live action and animated — feature people of color or members of the LGBTQ community as main characters. Netflix, which has made a major push into kids and family programming the past few years, isn't too far behind. PBS has been heralding diversity in children's programming since *Sesame Street* debuted in 1969 and now has the first kids show with an Alaska Native as its lead in *Molly of Denali*, an animated series that premiered in summer 2019. And the 14-year-old protagonist of Disney's new animated series *The Owl House* is the network's first bisexual lead character.

At a time when the TV industry at large is grappling with its weak history of inclusivity in front of and behind the camera — amid nationwide calls for racial and social justice and the continued advocacy of groups like Color of Change and the Think Tank for Inclusion & Equity — it might take some lessons from shows aimed at the youngest viewers.

The 2019 Hollywood Diversity Report from UCLA showed that while minority groups had made gains, they were still underrepresented as leads on mainstream shows compared to their percentage of the population. Meanwhile, of 56 current scripted series for kids across Disney Channel, Nickelodeon, Cartoon Network and Netflix, 30 of them — about 54 percent — have lead characters from traditionally underrepresented populations. (The numbers exclude shows like Nick's *SpongeBob SquarePants* and Disney's *Duck Tales* that are primarily populated with non-human characters.)

Marsh

"We are in the first window of media consumption for kids, and that is an incredible responsibility and an incredible opportunity," Gary Marsh, president and chief creative officer of Disney Channels Worldwide, tells *The Hollywood Reporter*. "Along with Nick and some of the other streaming services now, I feel like, to some degree, we've helped change the sociology of a generation of kids by consistently showcasing a spectrum that looks different, certainly, from the TV that I grew up on."

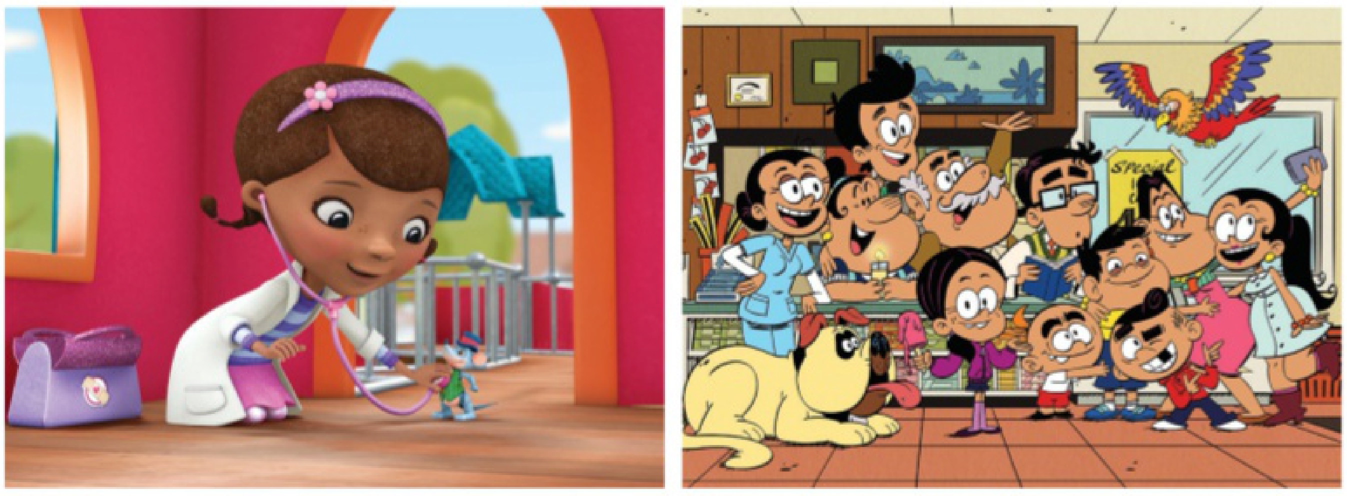
The idea of diversity in children's TV isn't new; *Sesame Street* has been an inclusive show from its beginnings more than a half century ago, and shows like Disney's *The Proud Family* and *That's So Raven* revolved around Black characters during the early 2000s. But, until recently, it hasn't been the norm. Now, people working in kids programming say they see an effort by studios and outlets to not only show inclusive characters onscreen but also diversify the creative ranks.

"I think as you have more younger creatives, there tends to be more of an openness to show who they are," says Elizabeth Ito, an animation veteran and writer on *Adventure Time* who's now working on a show called *City of Ghosts* for Netflix. "Gradually, there has been a little bit more acceptance and more awareness of all sorts of things that I think everybody was really clumsy about before as far as diversity and representation, not even just talking about race."

Ramsey Naito, who heads Nickelodeon Animation, says that in addition to looking for stories that come from a wide range of creators, she's also hoping to diversify those guiding the ViacomCBS network.

"I knew that I had to build a team, which meant we had to reorganize leadership and hire with a focus on diverse

RICK PORTER *is a television writer at* The Hollywood Reporter.



Disney Junior's *Doc McStuffins* (left) and Nick's *The Casagrandes* are among many diverse kids shows on the air.

Illustrations by **Luis Mendo**

MARSH: PAUL ARCHULETA/FILMMAGIC. *MCSTUFFINS*: COURTESY OF DISNEY JR. *CASAGRANDES*: COURTESY OF NICKELODEON.

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The Proud Family (left) and *Sesame Street* were trailblazers for inclusivity in children's television.

leadership," she says. "And I think over the past year and a half, you'd be able to see many announcements that we made [regarding] leadership and promotion that illustrate how diverse our leadership is, which is fantastic. Because what that does is it attracts diverse stories, diverse talents, to come to Nick and see themselves in our leadership and tell stories that they know we relate to."

Naito

Anna Berthold, a motion picture literary agent at UTA who works extensively in the animation space, says talk from studios, networks and streamers about wanting diverse creators is "not just lip service."

"It's what they're asking for — 'We want to hear more from Black creators, LGBTQ creators, Asian, Latinx,' " she says. "Not all of it is hitting screens right now because of the long lead time for animation, but it's going to be. It's clearly a priority."

That's not to say, however, that the kids TV business is doing everything right. *Doc McStuffins* creator Chris Nee tells *THR* that while onscreen inclusivity is rising — that show also was the first of its kind to feature a family led by LGBTQ parents — there's still work to be done in hiring and staffing behind the camera.

"It's a self-defining issue, as it often is," says Nee, who now has a multiyear overall deal at Netflix. "By not portraying diverse voices, we don't present ourselves as an open door for someone to imagine themselves in this career and working in this end of the business. So you stop people [from] heading toward becoming animators or writers for animation. We have to change all of that to make [it] clear that diverse talent is a priority."

Nee notes that she tries to further that cause through mentorship — not under a studio or network program but by actually hiring people from underrepresented groups to work on her shows. "For me, that's hiring people at a coordinator level but actively working to promote them," she says. "That's been a great way for me to develop a lot of homegrown talent within my own organization, and people are now showrunners and creators and EPs who started as my coordinators."

Kenny Ortega has presided over two of Disney Channel's biggest original movie franchises, directing 2006's *High School Musical*, its sequels and the three *Descendants* films. All had diverse casts, and his latest project, the Netflix series *Julie and the Phantoms*, stars 16-year-old Puerto Rican newcomer Madison Reyes. He notes that unlike his early days in the business, when he'd have to fight to hire nonwhite dancers for projects he choreographed, inclusive casting is becoming the norm.

"We are in the first window of media consumption for kids, and that is an incredible responsibility."

GARY MARSH, PRESIDENT AND CCO OF DISNEY CHANNELS WORLDWIDE

"I remember having to say, 'Look, if we're going to work together, you need to know I come with ideas, and if I'm not going to be able to bring those ideas into the work, then you're maybe looking at the wrong person,' " he says. "And suddenly I'm walking in the room and people are telling me that. 'We're a diverse-thinking company and we want to find balance in the way that we look at our casting.' And I'm like, 'Really? This is fantastic.' I don't have to engage in that conversation up front."

PBS Kids head of content Linda Simensky recalls showing her own children the series she worked on in the 1990s when she was at Nickelodeon and Cartoon Network. "They were laughing at them — not *with* them but *at* them," she says. "I asked, 'What's wrong,' and they said, 'They're so white.' To them, that just seemed kind of ridiculous."

Executives in kids programming say that developing and making inclusive shows is just good business — and that includes Simensky, who doesn't face the commercial or subscriber-retention imperatives that for-profit outlets do.

"You still want viewers, and I feel like capturing the world as it is makes perfect sense," she says. "Kids should see themselves somewhere on our air."

Disney's Marsh says programming for diverse audiences by this point is simply "Brand 101."

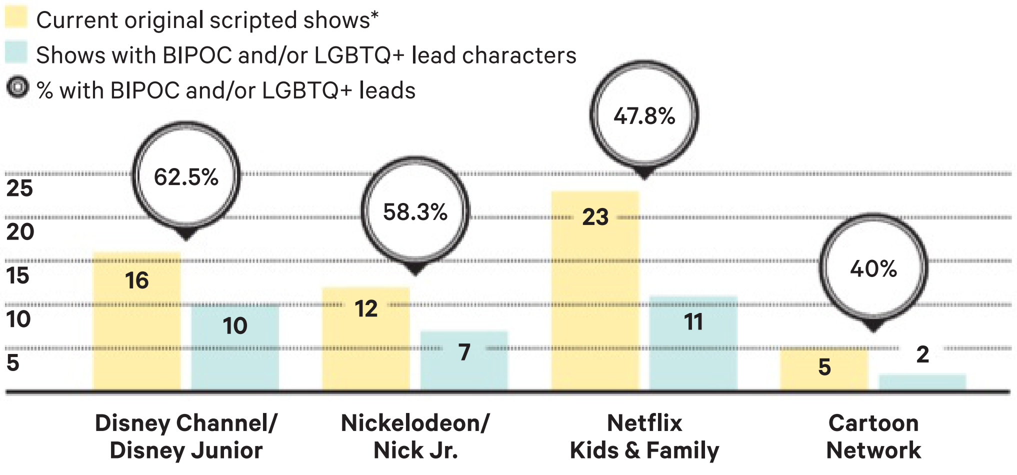
"To the extent that I can find content or images that look like [viewers'] homes, their clothing, their recreational activities, their family structures, they will connect more deeply with the content and with the brand," he says. "And, again, being in the first media window for many of these people, if I can establish that connection in their minds for what Disney represents to them — that 'Disney gets me,' 'Disney hears me' — I create loyalty for life."

That talk has all happened before, of course, without resulting in systemic change. Nee hopes the current moment turns out to be a true tipping point.

"I hope this is the year this becomes an ingrained part of how people think — that you have to think differently and think outside of your own point of view and the scope of seeing things you grew up with, and it's better for all of us," she says. "I hope that sticks." THR

Drawing Up Diversity

Animation leads the way in inclusive kids TV



*Doesn't include shows featuring primarily non-human characters.

PROUD: DISNEY CHANNEL/PHOTOFEST. NAITO: STEFANIE KEENAN/GETTY IMAGES FOR WOMEN IN FILM. SESAME: PBS/PHOTOFEST.

OZARK

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

OUTSTANDING LEAD ACTOR IN A DRAMA SERIES

Jason Bateman

OUTSTANDING LEAD ACTRESS IN A DRAMA SERIES

Laura Linney

OUTSTANDING SUPPORTING ACTRESS IN A DRAMA SERIES

Julia Garner

OUTSTANDING DIRECTING FOR A DRAMA SERIES

Alik Sakharov

EP 309: FIRE PINK

Ben Semanoff

EP 306: SU CASA ES MI CASA

OUTSTANDING WRITING FOR A DRAMA SERIES

Chris Mundy

EP 310: ALL IN

John Shiban

EP 304: BOSS FIGHT

Miki Johnson

EP 309: FIRE PINK

OUTSTANDING CINEMATOGRAPHY FOR A SINGLE-CAMERA SERIES (ONE HOUR)

OUTSTANDING SINGLE-CAMERA PICTURE EDITING FOR A DRAMA SERIES

OUTSTANDING CASTING FOR A DRAMA SERIES

OUTSTANDING PRODUCTION DESIGN FOR A NARRATIVE CONTEMPORARY PROGRAM (ONE HOUR OR MORE)

OUTSTANDING CONTEMPORARY MAKEUP (NON-PROSTHETIC)

OUTSTANDING MUSIC COMPOSITION FOR A SERIES (ORIGINAL DRAMATIC SCORE)

OUTSTANDING SOUND MIXING FOR A COMEDY OR DRAMA SERIES (ONE HOUR)

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Style

News & Notes

Outside Is In

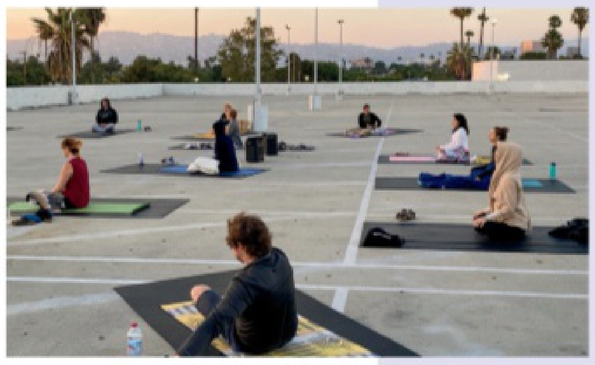
Nail and hair salons and gyms, restricted from indoor services, are migrating to the only places where health guidelines allow them to operate: patios, rooftops and sidewalks *By Emily Hilton*

After gyms and salons shuttered again in California on July 13 in accordance with health restrictions, many have pivoted to offer outdoor services, legal as of July 20 so long as safety mandates are followed.

NAILS While services are generally limited to manicures — as pedicure equipment is difficult to move — getting nails done outside is proving popular, says Color Camp's **Victoria Caruso.** The nail salon recently held a pop-up at Culver City's Platform shopping area, with plans for similar events. "Sixty spots booked within two hours," she says. Elsewhere, Wynn Nail Spa, with multiple locations, moved into parking lots, whereas Posh Nails in Manhattan Beach is operating on the sidewalk. Other salons offering outdoor services include Playa Vista's Beáut Nails & Spa, Mid-City's Luxe Nail & Spa and Marie Nails and Silver Lake's Kure Spa.

HAIR West Hollywood's now-closed cocktail spot Employees Only has set up a weekly pop-up where customers can enjoy a crudo station as well as services from a haircut truck. The Chris McMillan Salon in Beverly Hills and Atelier by Tiffany in Koreatown have moved to patios, while other salons migrating outside include Hollywood's Hairroin Salon, Redondo Beach's Salon Touche, Beverly Hills' Verina Organic Hair Salon and Westwood's Taka Hair. Per state guidelines, salons can't provide services typically done inside, like washing or dye jobs.

FITNESS Many yoga studios have moved outdoors, including West L.A.'s Laughing Frog Yoga and Modo Yoga (Echo Park and Venice), as classes require little equipment. Yet SoulCycle also has transitioned with a new rooftop program, SoulOutside, in Santa Monica. In West Hollywood, outdoor fitness classes are offered at Brick and Retrofit gyms, while glute-focused Bunda and Natural Pilates, both on West Third Street, are holding rooftop classes. And Hype Silverlake remodeled its parking lot in order to continue its spin, hit and yoga classes. "Everyone who has tried it loves it," says Red Diamond Yoga's **Kevin Diamond** of the Palms studio's fresh-air classes, now held in a nearby parking lot. "There is always a breeze, and the views are amazing. Nature is clearly the best studio designer ever." THR



Above: A class at Natural Pilates' outdoor terrace. Right: Red Diamond Yoga's parking lot offering.

DESIGN

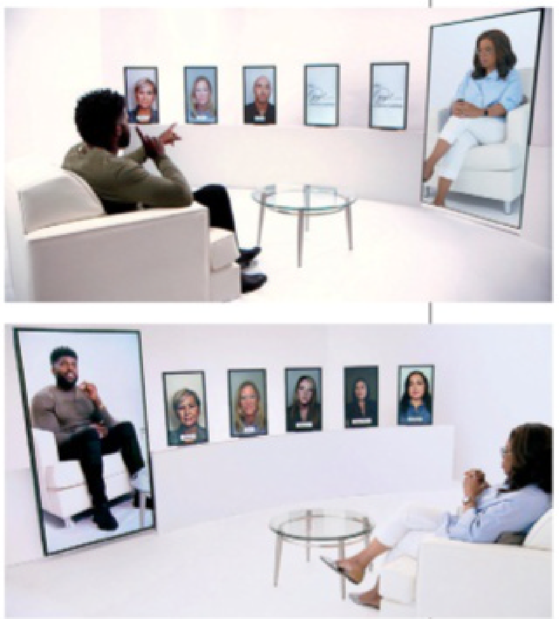
On Apple TV, Oprah Nails the Zoom-Era Set

Creating a talk show during a pandemic requires a new set of rules. For Apple TV+'s *The Oprah Conversation*, **Lorne Greene**, co-founder of experiential agency Viva Creative, designed an environment that dovetails perfectly with the remote communication age.

For the two debut episodes, which focus on racial biases, Greene created mirror sets for host **Oprah Winfrey** and her lead guest, former NFL linebacker **Emmanuel Acho**. Winfrey's minimalist set was built on her Montecito estate (by one carpenter), while Acho's existing white-box setup in L.A. (for his YouTube show *Uncomfortable Conversations With a Black Man*) was kitted out to be nearly identical.

"We presented the idea of making [the monitors] float, if you will," says Greene, who notes that cameras (all operated remotely) were set at identical angles to enhance the mirror effect. Greene also used ultra-large monitors to present Winfrey and Acho at life-size. The result feels as if the two are almost in the same place. Five more guests, seen on smaller screens, appeared on white backgrounds. Says Greene, "It wasn't about where they were, it was about who they are."

Greene also looked to the late **Steve Jobs** for inspiration. "[He] always promoted the idea of making the technology disappear," says Greene, who describes his own design this way: "It's people talking to people, not people talking to technology." — CATHY WHITLOCK



Oprah Winfrey, Emmanuel Acho and guests on the ultra-clean sets of Apple TV+'s *The Oprah Conversation.*

NATURAL, RED: COURTESY OF SUBJECT. WINFREY: COURTESY OF OWN.

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The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel

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OUTSTANDING DIRECTING FOR A COMEDY SERIES

“IT’S COMEDY OR CABBAGE”

AMY SHERMAN-PALLADINO

AMAZON ORIGINAL

The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel

AMAZON ORIGINAL
The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel
RACHEL BROSNAHAN
OUTSTANDING LEAD ACTRESS IN A COMEDY SERIES

ALEX BORSTEIN

OUTSTANDING SUPPORTING ACTRESS IN A COMEDY SERIES

MARIN HINKLE

OUTSTANDING SUPPORTING ACTRESS IN A COMEDY SERIES

WANDA SYKES

OUTSTANDING GUEST ACTRESS IN A COMEDY SERIES

TONY SHALHOUB

OUTSTANDING SUPPORTING ACTOR IN A COMEDY SERIES

LUKE KIRBY

OUTSTANDING GUEST ACTOR
IN A COMEDY SERIES

STERLING K. BROWN

OUTSTANDING SUPPORTING ACTOR
IN A COMEDY SERIES

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OUTSTANDING DIRECTING FOR A COMEDY SERIES

"MARVELOUS RADIO"

DANIEL PALLADINO

QUEENS HILLS
LUBRICATED FOR GREATER ABSORBENCY
CONTENTS FORTY BOXES
Pursettes
FORTY BOXES
NEW IMPROVED
BY CAMPANA
The Smaller, Daintier Tampon
In One "Super-Absorbent" Size
Greater Protection-Greater Comfort
Each Tampon Hygenically Sealed
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INCLUDING

OUTSTANDING COMEDY SERIES

OUTSTANDING DIRECTING
AMY SHERMAN-PALLADINO
"IT'S COMEDY OR CABBAGE"

OUTSTANDING SUPPORTING ACTOR
Tony Shalhoub

OUTSTANDING SUPPORTING ACTOR
Sterling K. Brown

OUTSTANDING SUPPORTING ACTRESS
Alex Borstein

OUTSTANDING SUPPORTING ACTRESS
Marin Hinkle

OUTSTANDING GUEST ACTOR
Luke Kirby

OUTSTANDING GUEST ACTRESS
Wanda Sykes

OUTSTANDING CASTING
Cindy Tolan, Casting by

OUTSTANDING CINEMATOGRAPHY FOR A SINGLE-CAMERA SERIES (ONE HOUR)
M. David Mullen, ASC, Director of Photography

OUTSTANDING DIRECTING
DANIEL PALLADINO
"MARVELOUS RADIO"

OUTSTANDING PERIOD AND/OR CHARACTER HAIRSTYLING
Kimberley Spiteri, Department Head Hairstylist
Michael S. Ward, Key Hairstylist
Tijen Osman, Additional Hairstylist

OUTSTANDING ORIGINAL MUSIC AND LYRICS
"One Less Angel"
Thomas Mizer, Music & Lyrics
Curtis Moore, Music & Lyrics

OUTSTANDING MUSIC SUPERVISION
Robin Urdang, Music Supervisor
Amy Sherman-Palladino, Music Supervisor
Daniel Palladino, Music Supervisor

OUTSTANDING PERIOD AND/OR CHARACTER MAKEUP (NON-PROSTHETIC)
Patricia Regan, Department Head Makeup Artist
Claus Lulla, Key Makeup Artist
Joseph A. Campayno, Key Makeup Artist
Margot Boccia, Makeup Artist
Michael Laudati, Makeup Artist
Tomasina Smith, Makeup Artist
Roberto Baez, Makeup Artist
Alberto Machuca, Makeup Artist

OUTSTANDING LEAD ACTRESS
RACHEL BROSNAHAN

OUTSTANDING PERIOD COSTUMES
Donna Zakowska, Costume Designer
Marina Reti, Assistant Costume Designer
Sheila Grover, Costume Supervisor
Ginnie Patton, Costume Supervisor

OUTSTANDING PRODUCTION DESIGN FOR A NARRATIVE PERIOD OR FANTASY PROGRAM (ONE HOUR OR MORE)
Bill Groom, Production Designer
Neil Prince, Art Director
Ellen Christiansen, Set Decorator

OUTSTANDING SINGLE-CAMERA PICTURE EDITING
Kate Sanford, ACE, Editor
Tim Streeto, ACE, Editor

OUTSTANDING SOUND MIXING FOR A COMEDY OR DRAMA SERIES (ONE HOUR)
Mathew Price CAS, Production Sound Mixer
Ron Bochar CAS, Re-Recording Mixer
George A. Lara CAS, Foley Mixer
David Boulton, ADR Mixer

AMAZON ORIGINAL

The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel

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MAISEL TOV!

TO

TELEVISION'S MOST NOMINATED COMEDY!

Industry Parents Brace for Remote School 2.0

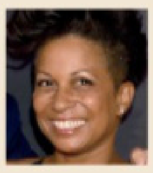
As fall semesters start in Los Angeles — once again virtually amid the pandemic — families look to online tutoring, in-home helpers, ditching private schools and even leaving the city altogether: 'You can consider renting an RV and taking school on the road' ***By Elycia Rubin***

Back to school is usually a time of eager anticipation, but with Los Angeles County recently hitting a somber milestone of more than 200,000 positive COVID-19 cases, it's back to the home computer for thousands of students. "Per Gov. **Gavin Newsom**'s orders, schools cannot physically open until they have come off the state monitoring list for 14 consecutive days," says **Margo Minecki**, public information officer at the Los Angeles County Office of Education. "Los Angeles County is on that watch list, so no schools may physically open at this time." This applies to public and private schools.

It's a grim reality for families throughout Southern California who were looking forward to getting back on campus and experiencing a slice of normalcy after an abrupt and traumatic end to the last school year amid lockdown orders. "It's disappointing given the lack of socialization that will continue," says **Paddy Cullen**, vp production at Warner Bros. and mother to a high school senior.

Returning to school is dependent on several factors, including the rate of COVID-19 cases. L.A. County's current case rate is around 300 per 100,000 residents, and in order to even consider on-campus instruction in some form, cases must be less than 200, according to the California Department of Public Health. Some entertainment companies, including ViacomCBS, WME and ICM Partners, are making it clear to employees that they will not be expected to return to offices if schools remain closed.

So, given that it's learning from the living room until further notice, Hollywood families are exploring a variety of arrangements.



Smith-Forge

"We want to give our kids some sense of familiarity, so we're doing a learning pod with just one other family our kids have grown up with," says **Karyn Smith-Forge**, senior vp production at Berlanti Productions. "We're all getting tested and alternating homes each day. Whichever home the kids are at, that set of parents will be in charge of supervising and providing support with the schoolwork so they don't get lost in the pandemic shuffle."

Casting director **Seth Yanklewitz** also is considering forming a small learning pod. "Me and my ex are both working dads, and we need the support for our son who is going into third grade," he says. "We would rotate homes with another family, be honest about quarantining and get tested regularly." He's also considering hiring someone part time to help care for his daughter, who is a preschooler. "Ideally, it's someone who can spend time teaching her the basics, otherwise she'll be sitting in front of a screen for hours each day."

Some parents feel their middle- and high-school-age children will do better while learning remotely if they have some support from online tutors. "The hope is replicating

CAA Launches Initiative for LAUSD Students

In a partnership with the school district, the agency is supporting a program for volunteer tutors

Last spring, CAA — as part of its 9-month-old pro bono partnership with Los Angeles Unified School District — helped launch the LA Students Most in Need Fund to raise money for meals and supplies for families impacted by the pandemic. Now, the CAA Foundation is launching the Ready Set Learn initiative to raise funds for digital devices for teachers, and instituting the pilot program Step Up Tutoring to connect volunteers to students in need. A number of CAA agents will be among the tutors. To donate or volunteer, go to *caa.com/readysetlearn.* — DEGEN PENER

Illustration by **Steven Scott**

SMITH-FORGE: ALBERTO E. RODRIGUEZ/GETTY IMAGES.

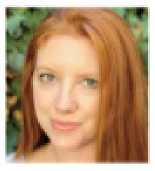
CLOSED CAMPUS
NO TRESPASSING
NO LOITERING
VIOLATORS WILL BE PROSECUTED
McKINLEY SCHOOL

Two security guards at Compton's McKinley Elementary School in April, after Los Angeles Unified schools were shut down because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

the pedagogical experience as closely as possible while operating remotely," says showrunner **Marc Guggenheim**. "Given my kids are self-starters, they don't need to be overseen, but we've also supplemented their educations with at-home tutoring, and that tutoring has continued virtually while we've been under quarantine."

The pandemic also has put a spotlight on socioeconomic inequities nationwide, including in education. "More than 80 percent of the families we serve live in poverty," says Los Angeles Unified School District superintendent **Austin Beutner**. That's something that is top of mind for TV writer-producer **Audrey Wauchope**. "I'm a big public school supporter, and we're trying not to lean into furthering the inequities of other families in the city," she says. "We're not pulling [my daughter] from school — we know a ton who did and went private or homeschool — and we're not doing a pod with a tutor. We're sticking with the distance learning the school is providing."

Guggenheim



Wauchope

However, companies that offer supplemental learning options are seeing a big rise in business, including at Embark World Academy, where kids engage in master class-style activities; college prep-focused Xceed Anywhere; and Mastery Coding, which provides career-focused computer programming instruction.

Dov Engelberg, president of Mulholland Prep, a go-to for industry families seeking academic and testing support, is receiving many tutoring requests — especially given that the typical "summer slide" is not just the standard three months of break, but more like six months when the last semester of distance learning is factored in. "The majority of students haven't had regular, consistent academic exercise for much longer than usual," he says. "Parents have expressed concern about their kids falling behind, and a tutor can provide some reassurance and support."

While many tutors are working virtually, some families are now considering hiring people to help with teaching inside the home, which presents another set of worries. "My husband is in a higher risk group with regards to the virus, so we are very reluctant about hiring anyone," says **Sebastian Dungan**, vp original movies at Lifetime. But, he adds, "We need to do something different than what we did last semester because online school was a disaster for our middle schooler, and I don't see how it will work for our 5-year-old twins, who are supposed to start kindergarten this fall."

And for students with learning differences, the need for academic support is amplified with virtual learning. "Schooling from home is not only lonely, but it's even more challenging for my daughter, who is not a self-starter and works with a learning specialist at school," says one Hollywood producer. "We're not bringing anyone into our home right now, so there's none of that in-person support."

While the reality of another bout of distance learning settles in, so does the fact of paying private school tuition for remote schooling, which can run upward of $50,000 a year per child. "Why should we pay for private school right now?" says **Michael McDonald**, head of scripted television at John Legend's Get Lifted Film Co. "My husband and I are looking at other options for our kids."

Some families are making even more dramatic changes. Psychologist **Fay Van Der Kar-Levinson**, a prominent education adviser to many industry parents, shares that several of her clients are moving to mountain towns such as Park City and Aspen, where some schools are open. "There's a yearning to be in that more rural environment," she says.

Another option: stay enrolled in Los Angeles but be elsewhere. "You can consider renting an RV and taking school on the road," says film director **Dan Mirvish**, who has two kids in the Culver City school system. "This is a challenging time, but we also see it as an opportunity."

SOCIAL RECKONING

Racial-Justice Protests Prompt Private School Change

A number of L.A. independent schools are changing up their curricula and instituting staff anti-racism trainings as alumni take to Instagram to tell stories of bias

Following national racial-justice protests, Instagram accounts — like Black at Harvard-Westlake (@blackathw) — began popping up across the country. They provided platforms for alumni and students of private schools to share stories of bias and microaggressions. Now some L.A. private schools are making extra efforts to address diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI).

"A moment of reckoning happened when @blackatoakwood went live," says Oakwood's director of communications **Bret Nicely**. Along with recommended books (every employee is reading Ibram X. Kendi's *How to Be an Antiracist*), the North Hollywood school — where 42 percent of secondary students and 32 percent of K-12 faculty identify as BIPOC — is focused on financial support for DEI, curricula changes with an eye to BIPOC perspectives and increased extracurricular programming.

In West Hollywood, the Center for Early Education rolled out a summer speaker series for families that included author **Ta-Nehisi Coates** and Dr. **Shaun Harper**, director of the USC Race and Equity Center. (CEE says 52 percent of its students are people of color.)

In a July 28 newsletter to the community at Sherman Oaks' The Buckley School, head of school **Alona Scott** wrote, "Anti-racist work requires us to commit to lifelong learning, including critical self-reflection, action and accountability." The school has launched summer DEI events (such as "How to Raise Antiracist Kids in a Racist Society") and a summer reading list that includes **Jacqueline Woodson**'s *Brown Girl Dreaming*. (A spokesperson says Buckley doesn't have student diversity numbers for 2020-21; Harvard-Westlake did not respond to a request for comment on changes it may make.)

All-girls Marlborough in Hancock Park, where 46 percent of students identify as people of color, is working on curricula changes in English and history as well as staff trainings on "equitable pedagogy and anti-racism in the classroom," says the school's director of communications and external affairs **Carly Rodriguez**.

Nicely stresses that the commitment has to be sustained: "It's going to be uncomfortable. It's going to expose blind spots that people have about privilege and the experience of BIPOC." — EMILY HILTON

A wall of Black Lives Matter-themed artwork at the Center for Early Education; Ta-Nehisi Coates spoke virtually to families at the school.

UNITES
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#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER
TA-NEHISI COATES
BETWEEN THE WORLD AND ME

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PROMOTION

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AWARD SEASON'S SIGNATURE SHOW IS ON SUNDANCETV

NEW EPISODE

8/23 - DRAMA ACTRESSES

CLOSE UP with The Hollywood Reporter

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Multiple nominee Issa Rae will make history if she brings home an Emmy for lead comedy series. Making way for diverse writers at her two production companies, the *Insecure* creator-star talks early doubts, her project with Jordan Peele and navigating Hollywood: 'You can't be polite, or tiptoe, or be modest about these things'

By JESSICA HERNDON Photographed by ERIK CARTER

'MY LONGEVITY THE DOOR

"I don't wake up like, 'Today's about to be about Black Lives Matter,' " says Issa Rae about why she thinks themed episodes are "corny." "When you experience racism or sexism, your life doesn't stop, but it may affect how you talk to your partner that night. Those are the moments that I'm more interested in." Rae was photographed Aug. 6 at the Paramour Estate in Silver Lake.

Styling by **Jason Rembert**
Brandon Maxwell top and skirt,
Cartier bracelets and rings.

WILL BE OPENING FOR OTHERS'

THROUGHOUT THE COURSE OF ISSA RAE'S career, she's absorbed plenty of good advice. But none has been as impactful as the wisdom she received in 2015 while surrounded by Ava DuVernay, Debbie Allen, Shonda Rhimes and Mara Brock Akil at an *Essence* cover shoot. At the time, Rae was 30 — a relative newcomer to the tier of power and influence occupied by the women around her — and trying to find the best person to direct the pilot of *Insecure*, the HBO dramedy series that she created, stars in, writes and produces. Rae listened as each woman emphasized pivotal career flashpoints, when they'd dropped being polite and stood their ground.

"I remember feeling, 'Oh, this is a life-changing moment for me,' " says Rae, 35, sitting outside her not-yet-renovated Inglewood office space, which will house her growing empire of two production companies and a record label. "I ended up making the call that I needed to make the next day," she adds. That call involved saying no to a director she didn't think was a good fit for the show. "Years later, he came up to me at a party and was like, 'Yeah, I would've fucked your shit up. You made the right choice.' I felt so validated." (When asked, Rae says, "I absolutely cannot say who, but if he wants to fess up after reading this, be my guest.")

Through the lens of a young Black woman, *Insecure* — a show comprising a predominantly Black cast and writers room — imparts savvy storylines that touch upon ex-boyfriend drama, gentrification, class, motherhood and code-switching (adjusting how one speaks, appears and behaves to make others feel comfortable). Through the series, Rae depicts what everyday life feels like for her and her friends in Los Angeles. Traditionally, Black characters have been "focused on specific struggle stories, or we're just side characters, or we're just supernatural, and there was never any real in between," she says. "That's something Prentice [Penny, *Insecure*'s showrunner] and I talked about — that white people get to have scenes with them just washing their hands and thinking. We don't get that shit." With healthy ratings (its fourth season had 4.5 million viewers per episode across all platforms), *Insecure* is arguably the most impactful show to normalize Black lives onscreen in the past decade.

Now four seasons strong, the Peabody Award-winning series is up for eight Emmys, including two for Rae: lead actress, following her 2018 nomination in the same category, and comedy series. If Rae wins for lead actress, she'll make history as only the second Black woman to take home the Emmy in the category since Isabel Sanford for *The Jeffersons* in 1981. If *Insecure* wins for comedy series, Rae will be the first Black woman creator of a premium cable show to receive the award. And as exec producer of HBO's *A Black Lady Sketch Show*, she is also in the running for variety sketch series. But Rae's not here for the accolades. "Awards don't validate you," she says. "They allow more people to know about the series, like, 'Oh, what is this?' That's all you want."

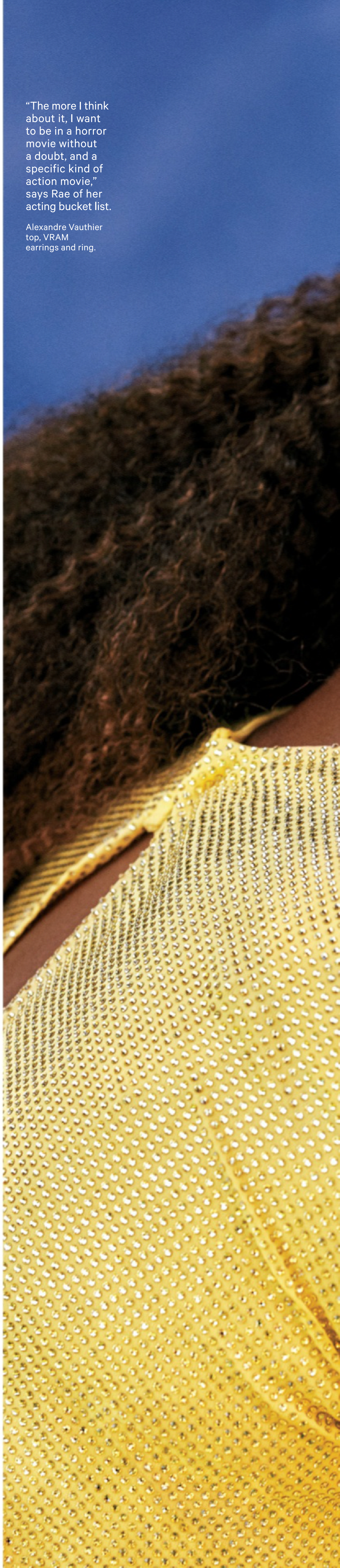
In 2018, Rae's production company, ColorCreative, struck a multipicture deal with Columbia Pictures to develop projects from diverse writers. In early August, it was announced that Rae would executive produce *Seen & Heard,* HBO's docuseries on Black television, for her other production company, Issa Rae Productions. She's also teaming with Jordan Peele for the sci-fi feature *Sinkhole* while juggling her first feature, *Perfect Strangers*; *Badmash*, a Bollywood crime-comedy picture; and HBO Max series *Rap Shit*, about female lyricists. Says Kerry Washington, who directed an episode of *Insecure* in season four: "Issa's vision extends beyond the limitations of Hollywood's imagination."

In addition to penning features, Rae, who starts her day at 4 a.m., has also been starring in them. From 2019's *Little*, to February's *The Photograph*, to *The Lovebirds*, which switched from a theatrical to a Netflix release in May because of the pandemic, Rae is on board for all of it: "Selfishly, I was like, 'Oh, I get to be a romantic comedy lead.' I was almost flattered to be thought of to do something like that."

While many actors relish jumping into the unfamiliar, for Rae, the key to her success has been mining what she knows. Born in Los Angeles to a Senegalese doctor and a teacher from Louisiana, Jo-Issa Rae Diop, who is one of five children, spent part of her childhood in Potomac, Maryland, before moving back to L.A. Two web shows — the first, *Dorm Diaries*, centered on Black students at Stanford University; the second was YouTube series *The Misadventures of Awkward Black Girl* — led to *Insecure*. "Nobody's you," she says. "How you exploit that as a creative means so much."

By 2013, a year after a half-hour comedy called *I Hate L.A. Dudes* (sold to ABC by way of Rhimes' Shondaland) fell through, Rae was in talks with HBO for *Insecure*, which premiered in 2016. Now in the (virtual) writers room for season five, Rae discusses getting back to production during COVID-19, pay parity and what it means to craft a legacy: "To be able to have the ability to bring other people in, who I think are massively more talented, it's something that brings me so much excitement."

Rae with *Insecure* showrunner Prentice Penny.



"The more I think about it, I want to be in a horror movie without a doubt, and a specific kind of action movie," says Rae of her acting bucket list.

Alexandre Vauthier top, VRAM earrings and ring.

HAIR BY FELICIA LEATHERWOOD, MAKEUP BY JOANNA SIMKIN FOR SHISEIDO AT THE WALL GROUP. PENNY: MERIE W. WALLACE/HBO.

I felt like this season, more so than any other, was a love letter to our neighborhood, View Park.
I love it. I'll walk in my neighborhood all the time because that's the only exercise I'm willing to do. This lady came up to me and she was like, "Yo, I really love that you feature our neighborhood." I was like, "I regret it." It was a hidden gem, but I had to open my mouth.

Even after going to Stanford, you came back.
[When] I was in New York, I was in the Black neighborhoods, like Washington Heights and Harlem. I was convinced that I wanted to make it out there — whatever that meant. I would come back and visit and a friend reminded me, "Girl, this is home and why don't you just come back here? Everybody knows you here." I had to get a new appreciation of L.A., and then just loved it so much.

Then I lived in Inglewood while we were coming up with the idea for the show, and knowing just how Black it is and realizing that it hadn't been portrayed in a way that I felt was accurate to how it is now … It just really excited me to set something there and make it a character. But no one really invests with the community in mind. That always bothered me. I remember being in Inglewood, like, "I want the benefits of gentrification without the gents."

Taking it back to Stanford, you studied African American studies, not film.
Yes, but I studied theater and took drama classes and creative writing classes. I thought I wanted to be a director until I started to do it. It felt like too much control. I'm not necessarily [about] the visual aspects. Like meeting Melina [Matsoukas, who directed seven episodes of *Insecure*], I was like, "Wow. You pay attention to every single detail and you get bothered by everything that's out of place." I just don't care enough.

After Stanford, you pursued a New York theater fellowship. How were those days?
In college, I also thought that I wanted to pursue theater. Then when I got to New York, I was like, "Oh, this is real theater. I

don't like this." It was a little too abstract. And admittedly felt really, really white in a way.

But the public theater was all about facilitating playwrights of color and creating this pipeline to Broadway. It sparked an idea for me to form a collective of Black filmmakers to make our own work and, I think, subconsciously laid the foundation for some of the work that I did later.

From left: Rae and Larry Wilmore at the 2016 L.A. *Insecure* premiere; View Park features prominently in *Insecure*; with Emmy-nominated co-star Yvonne Orji (center) on set.

Eight Emmy nominations for *Insecure* this year, the most so far. What is this moment like, and for co-star Yvonne Orji to also be nominated?

Anybody can tell you when I heard Yvonne's name, that's when I got really excited. I had been nominated before, but I'm very much aware that I don't do this by myself. I did feel guilty. It was just like, "Everybody else is killing it and they're really helping to elevate me and they're not getting the recognition."

But Yvonne was like, "They're watching and they're seeing the work we're doing." To be a four-season show, to have it happen now, is not lost on me because there's so many new and amazing shows. To have the culture support our show, it's a FUBU [For Us, By Us] show in every way ... I feel so blessed and we love every second.

"EVEN OUR SHOW, I FELT A HUGE GUILT IN COMING OUT DURING THE PROTESTS BECAUSE THERE WERE JUST SO MANY MORE IMPORTANT THINGS HAPPENING."

Was there ever a moment back then when you had doubts?

[With] *Insecure*, it took so long and every draft was like, "No, this isn't it. No, this isn't it. No, this isn't it." I was just like, "Oh, OK. Maybe this is the end of the road for me," especially when I'm investing in this big venture, which ended up being ColorCreative, and spent all my money and didn't have anything. I remember being on the set of a pilot we were filming [*Words with Girls*] and getting the call that HBO was not feeling the latest draft and I was losing Larry [Wilmore, *Insecure*'s first showrunner]. I was like, "This isn't going to happen for me, and I just did all of this for nothing."

Thankfully, Larry leaving for *The Nightly Show*, as much as I love him, was the best thing that could've happened because it forced me to be like, "OK. It's not a workplace comedy," and having a conversation with HBO was really helpful just in terms of centering it. It was just like, "I'm going to put everything that I'm going through out on the table in this pilot. If they say no, at least I tried, and fuck it."

Hollywood definitely isn't an industry that was made for us [Black people] to have longevity.

By no means.

How does it feel to be defying that and to say, "Fuck that. I'm here. I'm staying."

I do question that. I still [do]. For me, my longevity will be opening the door for others. I think frequently about the Tupac quote: "I'm going to be the light that sparks the inspiration, that sparks the change." I need to get that quote right. [Exact quote: "I'm not saying I'm going to change the world, but I guarantee that I will spark the brain that will change the world."]

Why do you feel like this season really stood out for Emmy voters?

I'm going to be real. I think the pandemic, being quarantined during a period when our humanity was questioned, in a more front-facing way, definitely helped. We came on during a time when people were bored at home, and also there were racial uprisings, and our show served as a comfort. Thank God, because to release anything else during this time — even our show — I felt a huge guilt in coming out during the protests because there were just so many more important things happening, I didn't want to take full focus away from that. But to hear people be like, "No, this is an escape. It brings us back to Black people being joyous and happy and ourselves" — our natural state really felt like we were meant to air during this time. I think that for sure helped people to see our show in a different light.

In processing the guilt that you felt, were there ever moments of "Should we alter a storyline?"

Not alter the storyline. Me and some of the actors were on a group chat. First we were talking about, "We should protest. How are we going to get together?" And it came down to the show, like, "Do we even do anything? We shouldn't promote this shit, right?" And then we got on the phone with HBO just to get behind the messaging and what we wanted to say, to make sure that people didn't think that we were being tone-deaf to what was happening. So they were also very helpful, and Natasha [Rothwell, series regular, writer and supervising producer] wrote a beautiful statement that we were able to piggyback off, just, "We're aware of this time, and we're also aware of the beauty of us, and we don't want anything to negate that." That's how we were all feeling in the episode that aired during that one specific Sunday [May 31]. It just so happened to align, in a very dark way, perfectly.

So many of us were just feeling the same feelings of dread. I was so worried, too, just thinking about, before I went out there, the people who were out there in the streets, and how historically, our voices had been suppressed, and we've been baited by various fear tactics, and I was just like, "They're going to target people. They're going to try to make it so that nothing changes once again." That was a devastating part: Is this just going to be for the moment? And then, are we going to forget about this? But from what I've seen behind the scenes and some of the people that I'm working with, there is a dedicated energy to making sure that this time is for real, and that we're making real impact moving forward.

Rae in her YouTube series *The Misadventures of Awkward Black Girl*, which led to a comedy being sold to ABC via Shonda Rhimes' Shondaland and, later, to *Insecure* at HBO.

WILMORE: ALLEN BEREZOVSKY/GETTY IMAGES. WASHINGTON, ORJI: KARWAI TANG/GETTY IMAGES. THEDE: LEON BENNETT/GETTY IMAGES. KING: KEVIN MAZUR/GETTY IMAGES FOR SEAN COMBS. PENNY: JEFF KRAVITZ/GETTY IMAGES FOR WARNERMEDIA. MATSOUKAS: AMY SUSSMAN/GETTY IMAGES. RAE: RICH POLK/GETTY IMAGES. *INSECURE*: MERIE W. WALLACE/HBO (2).

How do we keep that momentum going?
I think it is going. It's a terrible expression now, but it's keeping our foot on people's faces in that way of, "Don't forget this. You posted a little black square, but we're still about this life, and if you're serious, then do something about it." And I've seen a real commitment to people wanting to change.

Have there been times when someone, maybe perhaps with more power, wanted to override a certain vision?
All of that was early on. I remember the biggest thing back and forth with the former president [Michael Lombardo], and the show title. He wasn't super insistent about it, but he was passionate about the fact that he didn't think that *Insecure* fit because he was like, "I see these strong, confident Black women, and they're fierce." And all the terms that we use to describe ourselves, but I was like, "Ooh, that's not … No, they're not specifically." And [that's] exactly what we want to showcase throughout the show … the title reflects that, and as soon as I explained that that's what we're trying to combat, he got it and backed off.

Beyond those early script stages, they've been really, really supportive, and they've never pulled us to the side, "Can you explain this first because the audience …" They don't care about your broad appeal, which is why I also wanted to make a home with them, because the ratings on it were dry then, and they're very aware of being a subscription-based model. We're going to appeal to who we appeal to, and there's no pressure there. They were also really good about not leaving us in the dark about whether we were going to get picked up. That first season, I was scared as hell, but since season two, they've been really great about letting us know that we have a home.

I wonder about the dynamic of the room being predominantly white execs. Do you think that anything would be different if those rooms reflected the way the world really is?
A hundred percent. There's no question that some of the input that we would get would be different. I'm also really happy that there aren't a lot of executives on our show. Part of the intimacy is that we have two people [Amy Gravitt, HBO's comedy head, and Amy Hodge, vp original programming], where at a network, you have two people here, three people here, two people there, and it's just so many voices. Can HBO improve in terms of their hiring practices? A thousand percent. They've got to do it.

***Insecure* deals with issues of sex and race and class, but you guys never seem to jump into the topical fray. You're never like, "This is the Black Lives Matter episode."**
Yeah, I feel like it's corny. We're not an after-school special. That's not how we live life. I don't wake up like, "Today's about to be about Black Lives Matter." When you experience racism or sexism, your life doesn't stop, but it may affect how you talk to your partner that night when you get home or prevent you from doing something else. Those are the moments that I'm more interested in.

How do you see the pandemic impacting plot, and how do you intend to shoot?
I don't want to mention COVID or the pandemic in any way, shape or form. We are addressing the fact that the city is going to be different, and part of the way that we're talking about it is putting people with masks in the background or subtle things like the business being impacted because we're so location-specific. We're supposed to shoot in September, so that's not happening. It changes every single day. It's definitely a painful reminder that you don't control your plans.

What are some of the new pressures you're facing?
The longevity of it. I really want to make sure that what I'm doing has impact and is long-lasting. I want to feel rooted …

What would make you feel rooted?
Girl, this is for my therapist that I don't have. I don't know. It always changes. It's old age and still being here. Denzel-ness. Alfre Woodard-ness. I mean, Denzel is a good model because he belongs to Black people and has never denied who he is and his roots. The stuff that he's done underground to help young Black actors, to create a pipeline for them. He's also been a producer and a director and is just so revered and has a Black-ass family. I got to go to his AFI tribute, and I was just reminded, "Man, this man has meant so much to me, my mom, my aunt, my grandmother, and that matters to me." There's a legacy there.

You are now in a position to demand more money. What does that feel like?
We'll find out. I mean, I've definitely demanded. Yvonne joked before the Emmy nominations came out, "Girl, I told all my agents, 'Don't make no deals until after Tuesday or Monday,' whenever the announcements were, because our price is going up or down." So there is something to that, too, of just realizing your worth. Also, seeing how little

Issa Rae's Hollywood Inner Circle

1. Kerry Washington,
Insecure director
"I get the sense that Issa isn't worried about navigating 'Hollywood.' She's too busy grappling with the fulfillment of her potential and the execution of her legacy. One of the things that I admire most about Issa is her absolute authenticity. Her creative and professional choices are rooted in a deep sense of who she is, her gifts and what she uniquely cares about."

2. Yvonne Orji,
co-star and fellow Emmy nominee
"What I love about Issa's creative vision is that she's so clear about it. I remember one season we were running low on days to shoot. There was an opportunity for us to cheat, shooting somewhere in the Valley for South L.A. Issa said, 'Nah, that won't work because I know the neighborhood I want to depict, and anybody who lives [there] will know. I don't want to compromise that.' "

3. Robin Thede,
creator-star of *A Black Lady Sketch Show*
"Comedy writing is fun because you get to take the most outrageous situations and make them relatable and memorable, something Issa does with precision. There are so many moments [in her shows] that I quote regularly with my girlfriends. What makes Issa's writing so strong is that she's not trying to impress. She's simply giving you life stories and making them accessible for an entire generation of women just like her. It truly is Black girl magic at its best."

4. Regina King,
Insecure director
"Issa can make people who aren't Black relate to her very Black experience. Not many storytellers have accomplished that. You have Beyoncé, you have Issa. But I don't want any Black person who has been recognized this season to allow the conversation of 'Well, it's because of Black Lives Matter.' Don't fall for that."

5. Prentice Penny,
Insecure showrunner
"The thing that I admire about Issa? I think the love of her people and the people she works with. In the five years we've been doing this, she is still just as gracious and kind. She is so authentic to the stories we are telling and the experiences, from the writers to the directors we hire to the places we film. I think that permeates throughout the show."

6. Melina Matsoukas,
Insecure director
"We don't get to see that often on TV where two Black women support and empower each other and also are arguing at times, but loving each other in this way that they're not competing with each other. That is so important, and it's one of the reasons I signed on. Not only because I love Issa, but I felt like it was a perspective that was so unique. I related so much to what she was saying, how she really wanted to change the television landscape."

these white people care about asking for more than they're worth in many cases. You can't be polite, or tiptoe, or be modest about those things. You're seeing these nine-, 10-figure deals out there. I have a great team that also is not afraid to ask for beyond my worth. I have an amazing Black lawyer who is constantly being like, "No, I'm going to get you better." Or, "No, I'm going to make sure. I heard that so-and-so made this, you're about to make this."

Criticism — how does it affect you?
I'm open to all criticism. I feel like you have to be, to be in this industry. There are Black critics that I value what they think because I read what they read, or I read what they write about everything. I love it. I can see this point of view, and that's so interesting. It may be reflected in something else that I do down the line, or it may spark inspiration for conversations that we may have. We feed each other in that really interesting way.

But let's be real. There are a couple where I'm like, "Oh, this person just comes for me," or "This person doesn't like me." You're putting your personal life into it. You're a blogger, not a critic at this point. It's an art form.

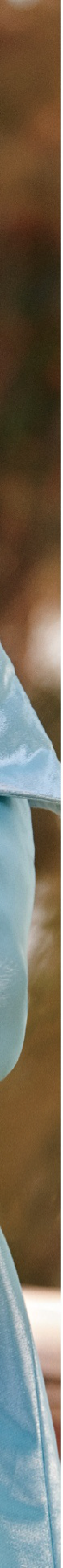
How is one of your first forays into feature writing going?
I'm excited. I'm doing a feature, an adaptation of an Italian film called *Perfect Strangers*. It's set at a dinner party with friends where they decide to read all the messages that come in on their phones. That's a game that I would 100 percent play. There's something about the cultural specificity of it that I wanted to bring to a movie. It's been remade in different countries, like in South Korea. I just felt I could bring my own spin.

Jordan Peele and *Sinkhole*: Please tell me how this went down.
Shoutout to one of our execs who found the short story. The premise is, basically, a couple moves into a house that has a sinkhole. When you drop things in it,

"The quest for female perfection is something so eerie to me," says Rae about one of the themes she'll be exploring in her project with Jordan Peele, *Sinkhole*.

Marc Jacobs coat, dress and gloves, Bulgari necklace, earrings and rings.

"THERE IS SOMETHING TO JUST REALIZING YOUR WORTH AND SEEING HOW LITTLE WHITE PEOPLE CARE ABOUT ASKING FOR MORE THAN THEY'RE WORTH."



the sinkhole makes everything perfect. The quest for female perfection is really intriguing to me and what that means now, especially in a culture that's still resistant to feminism. There's just something so eerie about that quest to me. Also, what Black female perfection looks like, and relationship politics — when you have a particular dynamic that's working for you as a couple. We're just in that brainstorming phase now.

Sara [Rastogi, who is the vp development at Issa Rae Productions] was like, "What do you think about bringing it to Jordan Peele or pairing with them?" So it was as easy as that. They were into it and then it was up to us to convince the writer, a young white female writer [Leyna Krow], that we were the best people for the job. She said in an interview what intrigued her the most was that the ideas that we had extended beyond her perspective. She was like, "I'm a writer and I think about white people when I write." The idea that we could bring something else to the table in a way that she hadn't thought of really excited her.

To be in a competitive situation like that — we're a very small, independent production company, [and] obviously Jordan Peele is just massive in terms of what he's been able to do in such a short time, as a director, for the culture — the fact that he even wanted to partner with us was really amazing. We've hit each other on the DM and we're really super excited.

So during this shutdown craziness, what have you learned about yourself?

I've learned that I obviously, like so many people, value touch. I value social interactions. I also realize I don't work as hard as I need to, to preserve certain relationships in my life. I need to do better about that. That's been a hard revelation for me. I feel like this has caused me to withdraw in a way that I'm not happy with. I'm trying to reconcile that.

I know some of your co-stars seemingly put you on blast about being engaged. When it comes to your personal life, why do you prefer to keep things private?

I guess because it's private. Whose business is it? I realized I just don't like to be the subject of conversations if it doesn't have to do with my work. I've always been like that, where I'd be dating someone and my friends would find out six months later. Like, "Bitch, what the fuck? Why don't we know this?" So it's just always been that I want to vet situations for myself. I really value that part of my life a lot.

Who should Hollywood be paying attention to talentwise?

Oh, so many people. There's a writer named Tori Sampson who's out of this fucking world. She's a playwright. Writer Syreeta Singleton. Child is another person, a director. Everything she makes is beautiful and she just did a video for Big Sean on a whim. Now she's the go-to video person. TT the Artist is someone else who's a multihyphenate, in a way where she started off making music and made a documentary [that] was supposed to be at South by Southwest. You know how we have crumping here? There's a different form of dance in Baltimore where people are dancing their pain away, in spite of their circumstances. She made the most beautiful documentary [*Dark City Beneath the Beat*] I've seen. Have you watched *I May Destroy You*?

Girl, obsessed.

So fucking good, but I was like, "Hollywood is paying attention." It's amazing. It's really disturbing. The conversations that have [been] sparked around it are just so necessary. I almost wish it had come sooner. It's going to be so impactful to a generation of people.

Do you know her?

Yeah. I knew her from when she was doing *Chewing Gum*. I knew this show was coming because we have the same exec at HBO. She told me about it, about how this was her story. I was like, "We're an HBO comedy. So she's going to make this a comedy, like this terrible experience where she got roofied and raped?" The fact that it still manages to be darkly comedic and also just flat-out funny is just phenomenal. We got to kick it in her *Chewing Gum* days and I've kept in touch. I get to watch this as a massive fan. It makes you want to create more.

Interview edited for length and clarity.

The Entities of Issa Rae's Growing Empire

1. ColorCreative

Prioritizing women and minority creators, ColorCreative, formed in 2014, facilitates the development and production of original scripted and unscripted content for film, TV and digital. "I'm drawn to ambitious people who are confident in what they have to say," says Rae of what she looks for in the talent she signs. In 2018, the company, which uses a Patreon account to help fund the work of upcoming talent, teamed with Columbia Pictures for a multipicture deal to develop projects from diverse writers. In July, Rae and her production partner, Deniese Davis, added a management division, which motion picture agent and CAA alum Talitha Watkins will run.

2. Issa Rae Productions

Dedicated to developing projects that break boundaries in storytelling and representation, Rae's production banner, which produces *Insecure* and *A Black Lady Sketch Show*, will executive produce, alongside Montrel McKay, *Seen & Heard*, the two-part docuseries for HBO on Black television's history. "It's taking a deep dive in the stories that you didn't hear from some of our all-time greats, behind the scenes and in front of the camera," says Rae, who credits 1990s shows like *Moesha* and *Living Single* as paving "the way for my existence." *Tre Cnt*, a half-hour series on backyard wrestling, for which Rae has teamed with Dwayne Johnson and Dany Garcia's Seven Bucks Productions, is also in development, as is *Ghost in the Machine*, a feature based on real-life Black financial Robin Hood figure Tanya Smith.

Singer TeaMarrr (right) with Rae.

3. Raedio

In 2019 Rae and business partner Benoni Tagoe launched Raedio, a music company housing publishing and a library via a partnership with Kobalt; music supervision by way of the acquisition of Bonfire Collective; and a record label, an imprint of Atlantic Records. TeaMarrr, an R&B singer whose music was featured on *Insecure*, is the first artist to sign. With a mission to give artists ownership of their masters and provide them with health care, Rae told *Billboard* of the acts she's looking to sign: "I want to prioritize female artists, L.A. artists and Black independent artists."

4. Streamlytics

Rae invested in the streaming-media data startup focused on providing data that reflects the tastes of people of color in late 2019. The company, which Rae told *Fast Company* is "necessary for transparency and consumer ownership," was founded by Angela Benton, entrepreneur and owner of B20, a media platform for Black people working in tech. Rae has called Benton "a pioneer in the tech space."

WE'RE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER

Hilltop Coffee + Kitchen ↑

Motivated by the desire for a Black-owned space in her neighborhood where people could gather and be productive, Rae, alongside co-owners Ajay Relan and Yonnie Hagos, opened Hilltop Coffee + Kitchen in Inglewood (there's another outpost in View Park) in late 2019. Scenes from season four of *Insecure* were shot there, as were the show's Wine Down segments. "The more I became stable, the more I realized, 'Oh, I can do what I always wanted to do and thought about doing, and take it a step at a time,' " says Rae of investing in her community.

HILLTOP: ED RUDOLPH. TEAMARRR: LEON BENNETT/GETTY IMAGES FOR BET.

Cannabis for the Soul (Acres and Acres of It)

TO UNDERSTAND WHY NON-POT SMOKER JIM BELUSHI DEPARTED HOLLYWOOD TO FARM THE 'PLANT THAT HEALS,' YOU MUST UNDERSTAND THE KEY TRAUMA OF HIS LIFE — THE LOSS OF HIS BROTHER: 'IF IT WASN'T FOR JOHN, I'D BE SERVING DINNER TONIGHT AT MY DAD'S RESTAURANT'

By Seth Abramovitch

"*According to Jim* afforded me not to have to do gigs so I can chase the magic again," says Jim Belushi, pictured at Belushi's Farm in Eagle Point, Oregon. "I'm a magic chaser."

The tale of how Jim Belushi went from one of

Hollywood’s top-earning actors — at his peak, he was making $500,000 an episode on *According to Jim*, which ran for eight seasons on ABC — to Southern Oregon pot farmer begins with a baptism. Shortly before the sitcom about a suburban Chicago dad wrapped in 2009, Belushi visited a family friend who lived on the Rogue River, a spectacularly scenic waterway famed for its salmon runs. “I went skinny-dipping in that river,” recalls Belushi, 66. Submerging himself naked in the Rogue’s pristine waters had a profoundly transformative effect on him. “I came out going, ‘You know what? I think we should look for a place around here.’ ”

Three years later, Belushi got his wish and purchased 15 acres of prime riverfront property in Eagle Point — what previously was an Elks Club picnic grounds that had fallen into disrepair — for the bargain price of $725,000. There, he built himself a rustic cottage out of reclaimed wood and developed the property around it. He refurbished a stage on the grounds, where he and close friend “Danny” Aykroyd have performed for local charities as The Blues Brothers, the legendary music act co-founded by Belushi’s late brother John, who, just 33 at the time, succumbed to a fatal overdose in 1982. (Jim has stepped in for John in the years since his brother’s death and starred opposite Aykroyd in the 1998 *Blues Brothers* movie sequel *Blues Brother 2000*.)

In 2014, Belushi’s Oregon neighbor died, and suddenly 80 lush acres of prime farmland opened up, which he also bought. Thus arose the matter of what to grow. “There’s a line between Napa and about 20 miles above me that’s a [latitudinal] parallel,” Belushi says of the fertile region. “They say that God on the seventh day dragged his hand along that parallel, all the way from Napa and Southern Oregon, through the groves and cornfields of Illinois, all the way to Bordeaux and Burgundy. That parallel just has the perfect sun, soil, temperatures and water.”

Belushi considered a variety of crops, everything from hay to soybeans. But on July 1, 2015, Measure 91 was signed into law, legalizing the nonmedical cultivation and use of marijuana in Oregon. The result was a green gold rush. These days, every billboard at the local airport near Medford is covered in something pot-related, and the aroma of weed permeates the roads. Belushi decided that year to grow his own cannabis crops and documented the entire, quixotic enterprise on film — the results of which will air as *Growing Belushi*, a three-part Discovery documentary premiering Aug. 19. Not being a pot smoker himself — he hadn’t touched it since high school — it caught his friends and family off guard.

“I couldn’t wrap my head around it at first,” says Rob Lowe, 56, a confidant since the two met on the set of the 1986 romantic comedy *About Last Night*, which Belushi credits with launching his film career. “Jimmy is always looking for a new adventure.”

Left: Jim (left) and John Belushi at the Universal Amphitheater for a Blues Brothers concert in 1980. Inset, from left: Siblings Marian, John and Jim in the late ’50s.

Five years later, Belushi has pivoted away from Hollywood to focus the majority of his time and energy on growing marijuana on Belushi’s Farm. “I’ve done it,” he says of the L.A. lifestyle. “I raised my kids there, went to all the premieres. I went to award shows. I’ve been to Toscana 1,600 times. I have a grateful feeling for the life I had there — I’m just moving on to kind of a new reinvention.”

In August 2019, he put the larger of his two Brentwood homes, a 14,300-square-foot Tuscan villa, on the market for $28 million. (It hasn’t sold yet.) As for acting, since *According to Jim*, Belushi has made it a habit of popping up only sporadically and in some unlikely places. Part of that may be a result of his reputation: The sitcom was not a happy set, according to several well-placed sources, who say Belushi indulged in control-freak behavior that increased as the show grew more valuable to ABC. “I have high standards and a high work ethic. You could probably say I should have delivered the message differently,” Belushi responds, adding that he personally called every writer and co-star Courtney

PREVIOUS SPREAD: COURTESY OF BELUSHI'S FARM. THIS SPREAD: GROUP: COURTESY OF BELUSHI'S FARM. FAMILY: COURTESY OF JIM BELUSHI (2). JACK: COURTESY OF DISCOVERY CHANNEL (2).

The property is in Oregon's Banana Belt, "the best growing for wine, grapes, pears and cannabis," says Belushi (center), with farm staffers and cousin Chris Karakosta (far right).

Thorne-Smith after production to "make amends. I apologized for my brashness in delivering the message."

Synonymous throughout the '80s and '90s with mainstream schlock like *Red Heat* (in which he played cop partner to Arnold Schwarzenegger) and *K-9* (in which he played cop partner to Rando the German shepherd), Belushi's résumé has taken a turn in recent years. In 2017, he played an alcoholic carousel operator in Woody Allen's *Wonder Wheel* and a vengeful casino owner in David Lynch's *Twin Peaks: The Return*. "I saw him in a little offbeat movie years ago and I thought, 'Who is this guy? He's really good and if I ever have the right part he'd be terrific,' " Allen writes in an email. "And decades later I had the right part and remembered him — and he was terrific." Before that, Roman Polanski cast him as a publishing executive in 2011's *The Ghost Writer*. Belushi waves off any controversies surrounding his collaborations with Allen and Polanski ("I've been lucky enough to work with some incredible artists," is all he'll say on the topic) and credits his career strategy to longtime ICM agent Eddy Yablans, who puts a premium on auteurs. "Eddy wants me to do the David Lynch-type things."

The life of a gentleman farmer — particularly one growing a crop as temperamental as pot, where slight vagaries in sunlight and precipitation can reap devastating results — can be hard. Early in his efforts, nine months of work were destroyed when Belushi sprayed rare Afghanese seedlings with a pesticide then left the lights on overnight in an indoor growhouse, burning the plants to death and costing him $400,000 in lost profits. So why, I ask. Why deal with all that hard work and frustration when Belushi, who enjoyed one of Hollywood's most lucrative careers playing blue-collar Joes and extra-manly everymen, could just as easily kick up his feet and enjoy the Oregon sunsets while sipping on a mai tai? "What you just described takes about an hour and a half," Belushi explains. "How long does it take to make a mai tai? How long is the sunset? How long can you put your feet up? Come on, man. There are a lot of other hours in a day, and at this point in your life, you want purpose."

But the question of why persists and has puzzled virtually everyone around him. "You know what I think?" Lowe theorizes, not quite ready to accept that Belushi is done with show business. "I think any time someone finds substance and fulfillment outside of showing up on a movie and TV set, people say, 'They're done with Hollywood.' But I think you can have both."

More than just a grower of cannabis, Belushi has evolved into a passionate apostle of the plant, in particular its ability to help users cope with psychological trauma. He tells me the story of a homeless woman he saw screaming on the streets of Portland. "I thought to myself, 'If I could just give her an edible, it may at least stop the screaming for her,' " he says. "We're all screaming from something — whether it's the loss of a big job, a divorce, some trauma, a severe illness in one's family. Whether it's my brother John, who died of a drug overdose."

Thirty-eight years later, John's death — and the media feeding frenzy that ensued — is no less vivid, no less horrific. It remains the defining trauma of Jim Belushi's life.

They had grown up very close in the Chicago suburbs, two of four children born to Albanian immigrants. Their father had worked his way up from valet parker to busboy to bartender and eventually opened a restaurant with his brother. "You know the 'Cheeseburger, Cheeseburger' place?" Belushi says, referring to one of John's most popular *Saturday Night Live* characters. "That was my dad's place, the Olympia Lunch — and he built it up all the way to a steakhouse." Jim was 16 when he first saw his brother perform at Second City, Chicago's famed sketch-comedy launching pad. "For the next eight years, all I wanted to do was perform at Second City because it was magic," says Belushi. "I auditioned, and I got in, and I called John. I said, 'Hey, man, I just got into Second City!' There's a long pause, and he goes, 'Uh … I thought you were more like a drama guy?' "

John eventually accepted that Jim would follow in his footsteps and mostly left him to find his own way — but would occasionally dole out some advice. ("Stick around at the afterparties just long enough to say hi to the bosses," was one that always stuck with Jim.) Mostly, though, he helped Jim by "showing the possibilities we could have in this little immigrant family," says Belushi. "If it wasn't for John, I would be serving dinner tonight at my dad's restaurant."

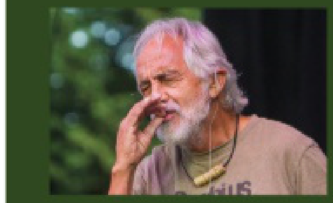
Top: "30 Rockefeller Center stank like a skunk," says Captain Jack, also known as "The Smell of *SNL*," of generously supplying the cast of the late night comedy show. Below: Jack on the set of 1993's *The Coneheads*.

After John shot to stardom on *SNL* in 1975 with characters like Samurai Futaba, an ancient warrior who worked menial jobs, and the Olympia Diner sketch, he would return occasionally to Chicago a conquering comedy hero. On one of those trips, he took his 21-year-old brother with him to the local Russian baths. "The steam's coming through the pipes, and a guy comes up with a bucketful of soap and starts smacking me with a bunch of oak leaves," recalls Belushi. "Then John puts me in a cold shower, and I'm just standing there, naked. He takes some shampoo and washes my hair. That moment to me was like: 'This guy loves me.' "

Later that night, the brothers went to a Sam Goody record shop: "John talks to the manager, the manager calls his accountant, and the next thing you know, he says, 'You've got 10 minutes to get every album you've ever wanted.' I got [Jimi Hendrix's] *Cry of Love*. All The Doors. Keith Jarrett. … I had a box to carry them out."

Smoke Stars: 6 More Celebs Cashing In on Cannabis Craze

BELUSHI'S FARM JOINS AN INCREASINGLY CROWDED MARKET OF MARIJUANA BRANDS ENDORSED BY 420-FRIENDLY FAMOUS FOLK



Tommy Chong
The *Up in Smoke* star was not surprisingly the first celebrity to start his own cannabis line, launching Chong's Choice in Colorado in 2015. The brand is now available in six states.

Snoop Dogg
After Washington legalized weed in 2015, the rapper threw his rastacap into the ring. Leafs by Snoop has since expanded to Canada and sells products like Cali Kush and Lemon Pie.

Method Man
The Wu-Tang Clan rapper turned TV star (TBS' *The Last O.G.*) released his long-awaited Tical Official line June 12. It will be sold only in "Black-owned and socially conscious dispensaries."

Cheech Marin
Cheech and Chong's other half put his name on his own pot product. Cheech's Private Stash features four strains and sells in California, Colorado and Nevada. It launched in 2018.

Bob Marley
The estate of the reggae icon endorsed Marley Natural, which started selling in L.A. dispensaries in 2016 and is now available throughout California and Washington.

Willie Nelson
The reefer-friendly country legend started selling Willie's Reserve in Colorado and Washington in 2016. He's since added a line of pot chocolates created by his wife, Annie, and a "hemp coffee."

But John could be competitive and territorial, too, something that increased as Jim started getting noticed by Hollywood. In 1979, Jim made a splash in *Sexual Perversity in Chicago*, the David Mamet play that served as the inspiration for *About Last Night*. "Don Simpson flies out, sees the play, takes me for a beer, and he goes, 'Yeah, they should make a movie out of this,' " Jim recalls of the *Top Gun* producer, who died in 1996. A few weeks later, he got a call from John. " 'Hey, Jimmy,' he says. 'Don Simpson just sent this *Sexual Perversity in Chicago* script for me and Danny [Aykroyd]. It's pretty good.' I said, 'Don't do it, John.' He goes, 'What are you talking about?' I said, 'This is my character. I developed it. Leave it alone.' John goes, 'Jimmy, you don't understand Hollywood. They're heat-seeking missiles. Danny and I are really hot right now, so we get everything. They're not going to make it with you. If we pass, they're going to offer it to Billy Murray. Wouldn't you rather have someone in your family play the role?' What a dick."

The project was put into turnaround at Paramount but would be resuscitated six years later as a vehicle for Lowe and Demi Moore. Only after virtually every comic actor in Hollywood read for the part he had originated in the play — Lowe's oversexed best friend — did the studio finally OK Jim, then 32 and best known for his own two-season stint on *SNL*. Recalls Lowe, "John's death was still recent and raw enough that it was clear that it was a subject that was not to be spoken about."

SNL had been a dream for Jim since his early 20s, when he'd drive down to New York City to bask in his brother's success. That's where he first met Captain Jack, a hippie adventurer who had earned the nickname "The Smell of *SNL*" around Studio 8H (Jack declines to give his last name). "I was always welcome backstage from the beginning of that show," says Jack, who, now in his early 70s, features prominently in *Growing Belushi*. (It's his Gulzar Afghanica seedlings, from seeds purchased on a trip to Afghanistan, that Jim scorches in the first episode.) "30 Rockefeller Center stank like a skunk," Jack continues. "Even [then-NBC chief] Fred Silverman up in the Rainbow Room had to tolerate those clouds. Everyone was so successful they couldn't do anything wrong." As for Jim, Jack remembers him hanging around, "but he was John's younger brother — and who talks to anybody's younger brother?"

John was a star middle linebacker on his high school football team, and Jim is certain he suffered from chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE), recalling the terrifying moment a teenaged John had a convulsive seizure in the family's laundry room. He suspects John's escalating drug use was an attempt at self-medicating and maintains that if his brother had stuck only to pot — his death was the result of a speedball mixture of cocaine and heroin — he'd still be alive today. He also blames L.A. for his brother's death. "I don't think John would have died in any other city," Jim says. "There is a loneliness that can prevail in Los Angeles, coupled with the unbelievable accessibility of everything."

Ask Belushi where he was when he learned of his brother's death — John famously died in the Chateau Marmont's Bungalow No. 3 — and he describes it as if it happened a few days ago. "I was in the middle of a voice lesson at the Shubert Theatre in Chicago," he says. "I was doing *Pirates of Penzance*, and a guy in the box office was listening to the radio, and he came backstage and told me he heard it, and I thought it was just some joke him and Danny [Aykroyd] were doing. I went to the box office, I called WBBM Radio, and the guy said, 'I'm sorry, Jim.' He read it from the AP report, and that's how I found out. And then I went and did the show that night."

John at that point had become the leader of the Belushi family. "In our family, the most successful was the head," explains Jim. "So it was like chopping the head off. It was like throwing a hand grenade into a family: The shrapnel hits everyone differently, rips us apart. And then to put the extra layer of notoriety around it just overwhelmed me."

When Bob Woodward, of *All the President's Men* fame, approached the family in the early 1980s to write what they thought would be a reverential account of John's life and tragic death, they opened themselves up to the *Washington Post* journalist. The book, 1984's *Wired: The Short Life and Fast Times of John Belushi*, offered nothing but a harrowing portrait of the superstar's downward spiral. "That was the true trauma of my life, the release of the articles

BELUSHI: COURTESY OF BELUSHI'S FARM. *LIFE*: ABC/MITCHELL HAASETH/PHOTOFEST. *PEAKS*: SUZANNE TENNER/SHOWTIME. *WONDER*: AMAZON STUDIOS/PHOTOFEST. *NIGHT*: TRISTAR/PHOTOFEST.
CHONG: MAT HAYWARD/GETTY IMAGES. DOGG: RICK KERN/WIREIMAGE. METHOD, NELSON: UNIVERSAL PICTURES/PHOTOFEST. MARIN: TAYLOR HILL/GETTY IMAGES. MARLEY: TOM HILL/WIREIMAGE.

From left: Belushi in a 2002 episode of *According to Jim*; 2017's *Twin Peaks: The Return; Wonder Wheel;* and 1986's *About Last Night* with Rob Lowe. "As an actor, I've done so much. I've worked with Michael Mann, Roman Polanski, Oliver Stone," says Belushi. "But this relationship with this plant kept revealing itself to me. It's become a passion. It's a purpose, and it is fun."

on *Wired* to promote his book," remembers Jim. "The betrayal [by Woodward,] the guy we thought was the white knight who brought Nixon down. He convinced us that there were conspiracies and people trying to kill John, all of this bullshit." Responds Woodward, 77, "I do describe John's talents and skill and charm, but the drug use is so shocking and raw, that is what you remember from the book. I had to do my job as a reporter. It's a horrifying story. And at the time and for many years later I got letters from people saying that the book saved their lives, because they were living Chapter 34 — and in Chapter 40, you die."

Belushi insists that, unlike his brother, he was never much of a party boy. "I never got high or drunk," he says. "I didn't want anything getting in the way of my work." He still isn't a weed smoker, but he does partake of his product; he likes to eat pot-infused chocolates containing 2.5 milligrams of active ingredient. "Really lightweight. Most people take five because five is described as a 'warm hug.' " He enjoys a strain he calls Cherry Pie, which he refers to as "the marriage counselor" because it turns him into a sweetie pie. His wife since 1998, Jennifer Sloan, likes it when he uses Cherry Pie; she filed for divorce in 2018, but the two have since reconciled. They raised two children together, daughter Jami, 21, who studies drama at NYU, and son Jared, 18, entering his final year at Crossroads School in Santa Monica. (Jim's third child, from a previous marriage, Robert Belushi, 39, is part-owner of Prime Pizza in L.A.) "I can't go there," Belushi says of the state of things with Sloan, who spends the majority of her time in L.A. and runs a children's boutique at the Brentwood Country Mart. "As of this moment, we're still together."

His weed business, meanwhile, has found its footing. Legalization resulted in a glut of product early on, making it hard to sell, but that has since settled down. Belushi's Farm produced 1,200 pounds of cannabis last year, a market value of $1.3 million. The name Belushi helps: Varietals like Blues Brothers, Belushi's Secret Stash and Captain Jack have taken off in Oregon, and Belushi is negotiating to sell the product in the rest of the U.S. and Canada. But running costs and taxes are high, and a cheaper black market for pot continues to thrive. "I spend about $500,000 in labor," Belushi says. "There is another $350,000 in grow expenses, and then there is marketing and travel. If we can make a couple hundred thousand bucks, I'd just give it out to everybody as a bonus. My goal is to break even."

Before the novel coronavirus pandemic, Belushi spent two weeks of every month on the farm, the other two traveling with side projects like The Blues Brothers or Board of Comedy, his improv group. But COVID-19 has forced him to hunker down at the farm for the past four months, son Jared by his side. "Turned that Brentwood boy into a bit of a farmer," he chuckles, "putting fence posts in, cleaning up the chicken coop." Belushi's next goal is to open a pay-what-you-can dispensary in Portland's Old Town district. "So the homeless, the veterans, anyone can come in and buy a gram for 35 cents if that's what they have." He's also a founder of the Last Prisoner Project, a nonprofit that seeks to reverse the country's roughly 40,000 cannabis-related incarcerations.

There's a scene in the second episode of *Growing Belushi* when Jim and his cousin and business partner Chris head down to Colombia in search of strains of weed recommended to them by Aykroyd. As he coasts by helicopter over the country's lush jungles bordering Venezuela, the pilot tells him that he's entered the Red Zone: Beneath them is the coca field where Pablo Escobar made his fortune soaked in the blood of tens of thousands of cartel-war victims. Peering down, Belushi can make out farmers tending to their leafy crops.

"I wonder if the cocaine that was involved in my brother's death came from one of these fields," he muses, and it suddenly dawns on him that the trip to Colombia was an attempt to get closer to John. "I wanted to get down in that coca field and pull it up from the roots and look at it in the eye and say, 'Stop hurting people and families,' " he says. "If they could turn those fields into cannabis, those families could make their living farming, and they could make a plant that could heal people — spiritually, physically, emotionally."

Perhaps this is the answer to Belushi's late-life rebirth. Pot as panacea. Mother Nature as family therapist. Or maybe it's just a lot of fun.

DARKMAN

Liam Neeson, Frances McDormand, Danny Elfman and many others recall the arduous making of the dark genre-transforming cult classic that repulsed test audiences before winning over critics and opening at No. 1: 'It was just a learning curve for everybody'

BY RYAN PARKER

DECADES BEFORE SUPERHERO FILMS became billion-dollar studio tentpoles, audiences were introduced to a mysterious, tragic character known simply as Darkman. Well before its time, the R-rated Universal film came out of nowhere to open at No. 1 at the box office on Aug. 24, 1990 (worldwide gross of $48.8 million off a $16 million budget), and earn critical love. Its success would spawn comic books, action figures, video games and an unaired TV pilot in addition to a couple of hokey, direct-to-video sequels absent most of the original cast.

Starring a pair of then largely unknowns, Liam Neeson and Frances McDormand — and Larry Drake, playing a ruthless mob boss, a significant change from his intellectually disabled *L.A. Law* character — director Sam Raimi's first studio picture set his trajectory toward his blockbuster Spider-Man trilogy of the 2000s. In 1990, the 30-year-old filmmaker was still known for making the blood-soaked, campy B horror films *Evil Dead* (1981) and *Evil Dead 2* (1987), which starred one of his oldest friends, Bruce Campbell.

Thanks to the enormous success Warner Bros. had with Tim Burton's *Batman* the previous summer, Universal rolled the dice on *Darkman*, the story of mild-mannered scientist Peyton Westlake (Neeson), who becomes horribly disfigured when gangsters destroy his lab. With enhanced strength (and bouts of explosive rage) as a byproduct of the trauma, Darkman uses synthetic skin to disguise himself in an effort to reclaim his love, Julie Hastings (McDormand), while seeking revenge for his shattered existence.

Now, 30 years later, with the help of cast and crew, save for Raimi, who declined to participate — "It was such a conflicted time for Sam; I don't think he wants to revisit it," says producer Robert Tapert — *THR* sets out to answer the question posed in the summer of 1990: "Who is Darkman?"

Tapert

ROBERT TAPERT *producer*
This movie was a labor of love for Sam Raimi. He tried very hard to make a movie about [pulp novel and radio character] The Shadow, but that proved impossible because at that time, it was going to be made by Bob Zemeckis. So Sam said, "I am going to create my own superhero and take aspects of other superheroes and incorporate them into the character of Darkman."

NANCY NAYOR *casting director*
Many [including the late Bill Paxton] were on the list for the lead, but Liam was so perfect, such a powerful presence with such emotional range and haunted eyes.

LIAM NEESON *Peyton Westlake/ Darkman*
The script appealed to the little boy in me because I know it would have been something I would have loved to have seen on a Saturday matinee growing up in Ireland, and it was a big fat juicy lead in a movie.

Left: Frances McDormand and Liam Neeson, whom she largely credits with helping her get cast despite the fact that she was primarily a theater actress. Above: At the time, McDormand was sharing a house in Silver Lake with husband Joel Coen and the film's director, Sam Raimi (pictured). Right: Neeson had to endure hours in the makeup chair each day for his transformation into Darkman.

TURNS 30

RAIMI: PHOTO 12/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO. MCDORMAND: AA FILM ARCHIVE/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO. *DARKMAN*: MOVIESTORE/SHUTTERSTOCK. *DARKMAN* PROFILE: UNIVERSAL/COURTESY EVERETT COLLECTION. TAPERT: JESSE GRANT/GETTY IMAGES FOR STARZ.

FRANCES MCDORMAND *Julie Hastings* At the time, I had been sharing a house in Los Angeles with Sam, and [husband] Joel and Ethan Coen. When the project came up, Sam was very influential in getting me an audition.

NAYOR For the female lead, we had narrowed down the choice between Fran McDormand and Kelly Lynch from *Drugstore Cowboy*.

TAPERT Julia Roberts came in. The studio was pushing for Julia for a number of reasons.

NAYOR She and Liam had dated briefly and were broken up. When they read the audition scene together, both actors had tears in their eyes. It was so intimate. Right after, her agent called and said she felt it might be better if she was taken out of consideration. I think she felt it would just be too awkward for them to work together again so soon under the circumstances.

MCDORMAND I think Liam had a lot to do with helping me get cast. We had a very good time together in the audition. I remember for the intimate scene being attached to the idea of making love with my socks on. I felt that was a really important element of the comfortable relationship. Sam said, "I am not sure about the socks," and I said, "I'm wearing the socks. I am wearing the socks."

BRUCE CAMPBELL *final disguised Darkman, (uncredited) sound mixer* We had made *Evil Dead 2* just before that, and I was not enough of a [acting] commodity for Universal. Sam threw me the bone and said, "Why don't you be the final [in disguise] Darkman."

NAYOR I was a huge *L.A. Law* fan at the time and had been so moved for years by Larry Drake's portrayal of Benny. So the idea of Larry going from playing such a sympathetic, vulnerable character to playing a ruthless bad guy was exciting.

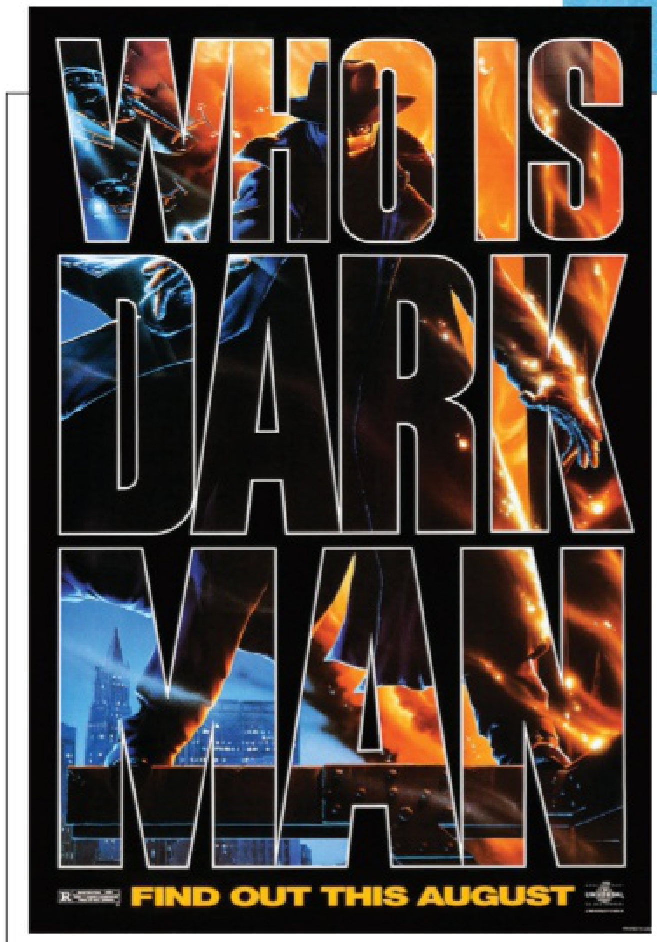
TAPERT There are 5,000 names on that script. It was constantly being rewritten. In hindsight, I am not sure it ever got better; it just incorporated more people's pisses. The Coen brothers were not credited by the guild, but they were instrumental early on with building the structure. The idea sprung from Sam's head, and Joel and Ethan coaxed him along that road. Chuck Pfarrer was the best at the villains.

NEESON The shooting of the film was exhausting, not least because of the long hours in the makeup chair, which started off at five hours, but we got that process time down to just over three hours. At the same time, I was also preparing to play a bare-knuckle boxer in a film [*The Big Man*] to be shot in Scotland immediately after completion of *Darkman*, so I was setting my alarm clock for about 3 a.m. in order to do a workout as preparation, so days were definitely long and for the most part tiring. But the exhaustion factor was in a weird way quite pleasing. I certainly led a very monastic existence for several months.

MCDORMAND When Sam got *Darkman*, he had been criticized for his female characters in the *Evil Dead* movies, and probably rightfully so. And I think one of the things he was trying to say with the character of Julie was to show he could write a strong female character. But, in retrospect, I felt like I probably should not have tried to play Julie as a strong female character because at the end of the day, she still was the damsel in distress, waiting for the hero to come save her. I could have done a better job if I'd surrendered to that.

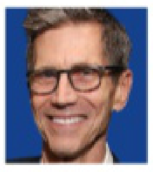
TAPERT Fran had her take, and it was a tricky part for her. Sam, at the time, did not have all the skills that he now has of working with actors and speaking a different language — a director's language — to actors. It was just a learning curve for everybody.

MCDORMAND I think saying "creative differences" makes it more grandiose for you rather than for us. I struggled against working in a way that I had never been trained to do. I was trained to be a theater actress. I was struggling with technically how to make movies. So it was an adjustment for me to figure out my purpose inside Sam's technical world of making a movie. There were times when he thought we could be steamrolled and then pop right back up, like a cartoon character. I chafed against that a lot, but I learned a lot, too.



Above: The film's "Who Is Darkman?" marketing is widely credited with its opening at No. 1: "The question was simple, memorable, had the title of the movie in it and super cheap to print on posters," says former Universal exec David Sameth. Right: Neeson took direction from Raimi (right), who found his first studio film traumatizing. "He didn't yet have all the skills of working with actors," says producer Robert Tapert. Below right: Larry Drake (top), most famous for his intellectually disabled character on *L.A. Law*, played the villain; "Damsel in distress" Frances McDormand with henchman Christopher Doyle.

> "IS IT AS BIG A BREACH OF EVERY CONCEIVABLE PROTOCOL OF DELIVERING A MOVIE IN POSTPRODUCTION? TOTALLY. IT WAS AN *OCEAN'S ELEVEN* MANEUVER."
>
> **Sean Daniel, former Universal production president**


Pope

BILL POPE *cinematographer* Sam needed a DP because Universal insisted that he not make it look like *Evil Dead* — standard studio-think at the time: Never give a new director exactly what they are comfortable with as a way of controlling them. Sam asked Barry Sonnenfeld, who recommended me. Even though I had never shot a feature before, and refused the job at first, Sam hired me anyway.

RANDY SER *production designer* As the film was a Universal picture, the designs were inspired by and meant to be a subtle homage to the studio's 1930s horror films. Darkman first arriving at his lair warehouse was one where the design was especially influenced by Universal horror films of the 1930s. The design suggested the play of light and shadow between life and death of Dr. Frankenstein's laboratory.

POPE We used the eyeball/flyball rig, the Perfalock dance-o-cam, the Perfalock drunken cam, snap zooms, whip pans, Dutch angles, cameras attached to sticks and blankets and virtually anything that moved. We always moved the camera. I have a distinct memory of being told by our dolly grip on day 50-something that we were doing our first shot in the film where the camera didn't move through space — and it was a 360-degree pan.

DANNY ELFMAN *composer* Because of *Evil Dead*, Sam went on my shortlist of, "If they call, just say yes." So his office called about *Darkman* and said, "He would like to meet you, but he's shooting. Can you go down to the set?" It's a night set at Universal with water cranes for rain. He introduces himself really quickly, says he loves my work and then says, "Let's put this guy to work!" They put me in a raincoat, give me a bucket and tell me that when Liam comes stumbling out, you throw the water in his face for when a car passes by and splashes him. I cursed him later because I got a cold.

POPE We built a three-story steel girder set in an airplane hangar. In days of very little safety supervision, we all walked the

POPE: PHILLIP FARAONE/GETTY IMAGES FOR KODAK. DANIEL: CHRISTOPHER POLK/GETTY IMAGES FOR PARAMOUNT PICTURES. RAIMI: RGR COLLECTION/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO. POSTER: UNIVERSAL PICTURES/COURTESY EVERETT COLLECTION. DRAKE: UNIVERSAL PICTURES/PHOTOFEST. MCDORMAND: MOVIESTORE/SHUTTERSTOCK.

steel like real steelworkers, acting and shooting high in the air. No safety harnesses. At some point, Colin Friels [who played evil mastermind Louis Strack Jr.] fell off in the middle of a fight scene and broke his femur. He went to the hospital, got it set, got some painkillers and returned that afternoon to finish the scene.

CAMPBELL My first wife divorced me, so I was broke and going, "What the hell?" So Sam goes, "Come on. We are doing post on *Darkman*, and I have all sorts of problems." We both loved sound. It needed lots of looping, lots of sound effects. So I made studio-guy money and wound up voicing every criminal who fell to their death. Holy shit, I screamed my brains out. And they're good, vintage screams.

TAPERT When Universal brought in their own editor [Bud S. Smith], they really did not want Sam in the process. Before that, we started on the preview process, scoring maybe 65 [from the audience] and we were down to maybe a 26. They felt that he had his opportunity with the original editor [David Stiven], who was so befuddled that he wanted to cut it into a romance movie. He had a breakdown and one day said, "I can't do this," and left.

BUD S. SMITH *editor*
I said I would only do it if you leave me alone, just go away and give me some time to look at it. Sam and Rob went to Florida for three weeks, and I tore into the film and did what I thought would be the right thing to make it viewable.

TAPERT Universal sent us away. We came back, and the editor had cut it down from two hours to 85 minutes. We tested that, and it did not test as well as the longer version, which was Sam's cut. I think we went through four or five more test screenings, and each time the score got lower and lower, and we got more depressed.

ELFMAN When I saw Sam taking this beating, I really got pissed. There was even a point when I threatened to take my name off the film and return my fee, telling Sam, "Whatever I can do to support you on this."

TAPERT It was the preview process that was the undoing. And truthfully, it was never going to preview that great because that audience was not used to something like that.

CAMPBELL My favorite scene was cut because of a preview. Colin's character starts to woo Julie, and you go, "Maybe this guy is all right." Cut to his apartment and he's wearing a towel, and he opens up a box and throws gold coins on the bed. Then drops his towel dives onto the coins buck-ass naked. They do previews, and that scene kept popping up. An exec looks at me and goes, "I'll give you a copy of that scene because it's never going to be in the movie." And I was like, "You pussy."

ELFMAN Universal's attitude at that point was cut all the weird shit, and I would tell Sam, "This crazy stuff is what makes the film." Rob and Sam did their best to piece it back together.

TAPERT I don't mind saying this now, and Sam will probably be unhappy, but the studio said, "There is nothing we can do to save this picture. Let's lock it [Smith cut approved]." So we locked the picture on Friday night at 5 p.m. We were incredibly disheartened and dispirited. And Sam's present editor, a guy by the name of Bob Murawski, said, "There is a much better movie than what we are locking right now." So, the decision was made that we would re-edit the movie. We spent 48 hours basically recutting the entire movie, restoring things we thought were important. We added nine minutes back in, things we really liked that the preview audiences would recoil from, but that was what it was meant to do. We locked it — and didn't tell anybody.

SMITH I was gone by then. I did what I did. I was just trying to make it flow so it didn't stop and start.

TAPERT Universal came to watch it after the mix, and there was this giant outcry, but there was nothing to be done. The negative had been cut. Critic screenings were 48 hours later. Bob and I advocated very strongly for the deception. Sam, left to his own, probably would not have done that. He is not that kind of guy. But I am.

Daniel

SEAN DANIEL *former Universal production president*
[Universal Pictures chairman] Tom Pollock was seriously fucking furious. I remember thinking, "That is one ballsy guerrilla move." Is it as big a breach of every conceivable protocol of delivering a movie in postproduction? Yes. Totally. It was an *Ocean's Eleven* maneuver.

DAVID SAMETH *former Universal head of creative advertising*
Sam introduced me to Liam Neeson, and I told him how excited I was to be working at Universal on a horror movie. And he just looked at me and said, "This is not a horror movie."

TAPERT The marketing team liked the movie because they had a handle on it. "Who is Darkman?" That was a stroke of genius.

SAMETH The question was simple, memorable, had the title of the movie in it and super cheap to print on posters and stick those all over fences in major cities.

DANIEL It would not have opened at No. 1 without "Who is Darkman?"

TAPERT There was an element of vindication for us being dismissed in postproduction when the movie opened No. 1.

ELFMAN It feels really good when it comes out that way. It's like, "Yeah, motherfuckers were wrong again, and fuck them and their fucking preview numbers."

MCDORMAND What is gratifying is that it continues to intrigue an audience. Even with all the Marvel and DC Universe that we have now. *Darkman* is an art film.

NEESON I have not seen the film for many years now, but it is still very dear to me. THR

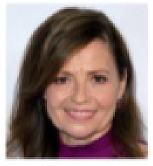
HOW TO HELM A LAST HURRAH

Three directors were tasked with wrapping up beloved shows *Modern Family*, *Homeland* and *Schitt's Creek*, a responsibility they didn't take lightly: 'If you end it badly, the whole series is colored in a different light' **BY CARITA RIZZO**

The cast of *Modern Family* had already reached emotional depletion, shooting their final group hug, when director Gail Mancuso told them one more take was needed. "We were getting ready to call it a day, and I went in and said, 'You're not going to like this note. It just got too emotional too soon,' " says Mancuso. "They're like, 'No! You can't make us do it again.' " But, at Mancuso's behest, the cast went in for one last hug, nailing the take that closes the 11-year series.

A bookend may be an episode etched in television history, but to Mancuso, it had the same requirements as every other chapter of the show. "Every episode is historic," says the two-time Emmy winner. "Any episode you do is going to live on in reruns forever, and if you don't get it right when you're shooting it, you're not going to get it right in the editing room. I'm pretty headstrong when it comes to knowing if we have [the right shot], and I knew we needed to do another take."

Having directed 31 episodes of the sitcom — more than any other director — Mancuso was the obvious choice to bring the ABC series to the finish line. "It just meant the world to me," says Mancuso. "I've always felt like I was part of that family." After a decade together, Mancuso also knew that while the logistics of the episode could be meticulously planned, there was no way to ready yourself for having to say goodbye. "You can't put in a production schedule, 'Allow this amount of time for crying or people telling heartfelt stories,' " says Mancuso, who let each emotional moment breathe on and offscreen. "Every day, my mantra was, 'Let's savor every second,' and I even said it out loud. We needed those moments. It was always real, but it was also the perfect way to end the series."



Mancuso

After helming every closer and all but one opener since the third season of Showtime's *Homeland*, there was no one more equipped to shepherd home the espionage thriller than Lesli Linka Glatter. But even with 25 episodes and five Emmy nominations under her belt, the last installment felt unique in its challenges. "Doing a series finale is just fraught with land mines," says the director of the eight-year series. "If you end it badly, the whole series is colored in a different light. I try not to think about it, but you can't help it."

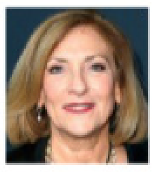
What didn't help ease the pressure was that the ending, where it is revealed that Carrie Mathison (Claire Danes) not only spent the past two years writing a Snowden-esque exposé of the CIA but also became Saul Berenson's (Mandy Patinkin) new asset

Creator-star Dan Levy (second from left) co-directed the *Schitt's Creek* finale.

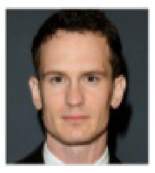
CREEK: COURTESY OF POPTV (2). *FAMILY*: ABC/ERIC MCCANDLESS. *HOMELAND*: ERICA PARISE/SHOWTIME. MANCUSO: JC OLIVERA/GETTY IMAGES. GLATTER: STEVE GRANITZ/WIREIMAGE. CIVIDINO: GEORGE PIMENTEL/GETTY IMAGES. ALI: CRAIG BLANKENHORN/HULU. ABDUL-MATEEN II, SNOOK: COURTESY OF HBO. CARDEN: COLLEEN HAYES/NBC. CRUDUP: COURTESY OF APPLE TV+. ULLMAN: SABRINA LANTOS/FX.

From left: *Schitt's Creek* wrapped with a wedding; *Modern Family's* 11-season run ended April 8; *Homeland's* finale saw Carrie (Claire Danes) trying to get the name of a Russian asset from Saul (Mandy Patinkin).

in Russia, came together in the 11th hour. "There was a lot of discussion and many versions, but I didn't get the final pages, literally, until days before," says Glatter. "Once we all read the pages with Carrie's book, it was like, 'Oh my God, that's the end that links everything together.' "



Glatter



Cividino

While the most complex scene was the nail-biting moment when Carrie threatens to take Saul's life unless he reveals his Russian asset, it was that last-minute addition to the finale that reminded Glatter that her craft is an intangible mix of consummate planning and magic. "When Mandy read the note that was in the spine of the book that Carrie had sent him, he took quite a long time before he looked up. The look on his face ... I got chills going down my spine from that," recalls Glatter. "Those are the kinds of things that you can never imagine in your head."

Schitt's Creek co-creator Dan Levy had always known that he was going to direct the final chapter of the quirky Pop TV comedy. "Making this show has literally been the great love of my life, so it just felt appropriate," he says. But because much of the plot focused on Levy's character's wedding, he asked frequent collaborator Andrew Cividino to co-direct. "The stakes were so high on this last episode that it needed that second pair of eyes," says Levy. "He and I actually went to film school together, so it felt like a nice full-circle moment for us."

Working together throughout the season allowed Levy and Cividino months' worth of wedding walk-throughs, but all the preparation in the world could not alleviate the stress of the big day. "I felt a lot of pressure going into the wedding, so I insisted that we cover Dan first," says Cividino. "His first take was so moving that I felt this huge sigh of relief because I knew if we just held on to this moment, we'd have our episode."

Having cast and crew moved to tears only worked to enhance the ceremony — with a caveat: "There's a challenge when your actors and crew are going through a very emotional goodbye to shoot a scene that doesn't feel like stringing weeping and hugging together for half an hour," says Cividino. "It was partly in the edit that we were making the decisions about how much of that felt right."

If balancing emotion and plot seemed tough for the wedding scene, it was a near impossible task in those closing moments where the Roses finally leave Schitt's Creek. That carefully thought-out production schedule all but fell apart on their very last day of shooting. "We did a lot of takes and moved pretty slowly through the day because every time you ended the scene, that would be another goodbye," says Cividino. "So we really eked out every minute of our final day together because we didn't want it to end. We weren't ready for that."

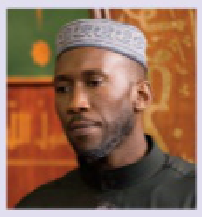
PICTURE-PERFECT PERFORMANCES

***THR*'s TV critics highlight their top picks in the supporting actor categories**

BY DANIEL FIENBERG AND INKOO KANG

MAHERSHALA ALI

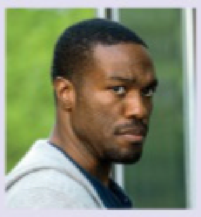
Ramy



The two-time Oscar winner lent a presence all his own as Sheikh Ali Malik, an imam who mentors the title character but doesn't want him courting his daughter. Magnetic, mysterious and just a tad too trusting, Sheikh Ali Malik reveals his aching human side when Ramy ultimately betrays him.

YAHYA ABDUL-MATEEN II

Watchmen



How do you play a dispassionate, godlike superhero while at the same time portraying a passionate love interest to the always-great Regina King? This was Abdul-Mateen II's task, and in the "A God Walks Into Abar" episode, he gets to play every contradiction of his dual role.

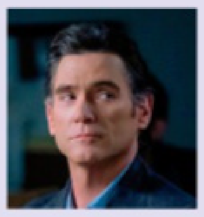
D'ARCY CARDEN

The Good Place

Playing a person? How pedestrian. For four seasons, Carden portrayed Janet, a nonhuman, non-robot Google of the afterlife who fell in love for the first time. How do you play all that and stand out as a comic highlight in a cast of TV veterans? Somehow Carden made it look easy.

BILLY CRUDUP

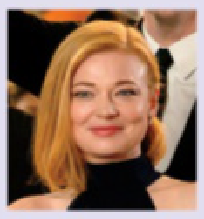
The Morning Show



Crudup's network boss doesn't always feel like he's in the same show as the rest of the cast, but his show feels like it's funnier and more wickedly pragmatic. His performance is a mixture of off-kilter line readings, knowing smirks and, best of all, a duet of "Not While I'm Around" with Jennifer Aniston.

SARAH SNOOK

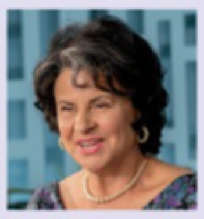
Succession



There are times Shiv feels like the only sane member of the Roy family, but Snook rarely lets us forget that beneath TV's most emulated haircut since The Rachel there's an ambitious woman who's every bit as coldhearted as her siblings. She just does the back-stabbing with more polish.

TRACEY ULLMAN

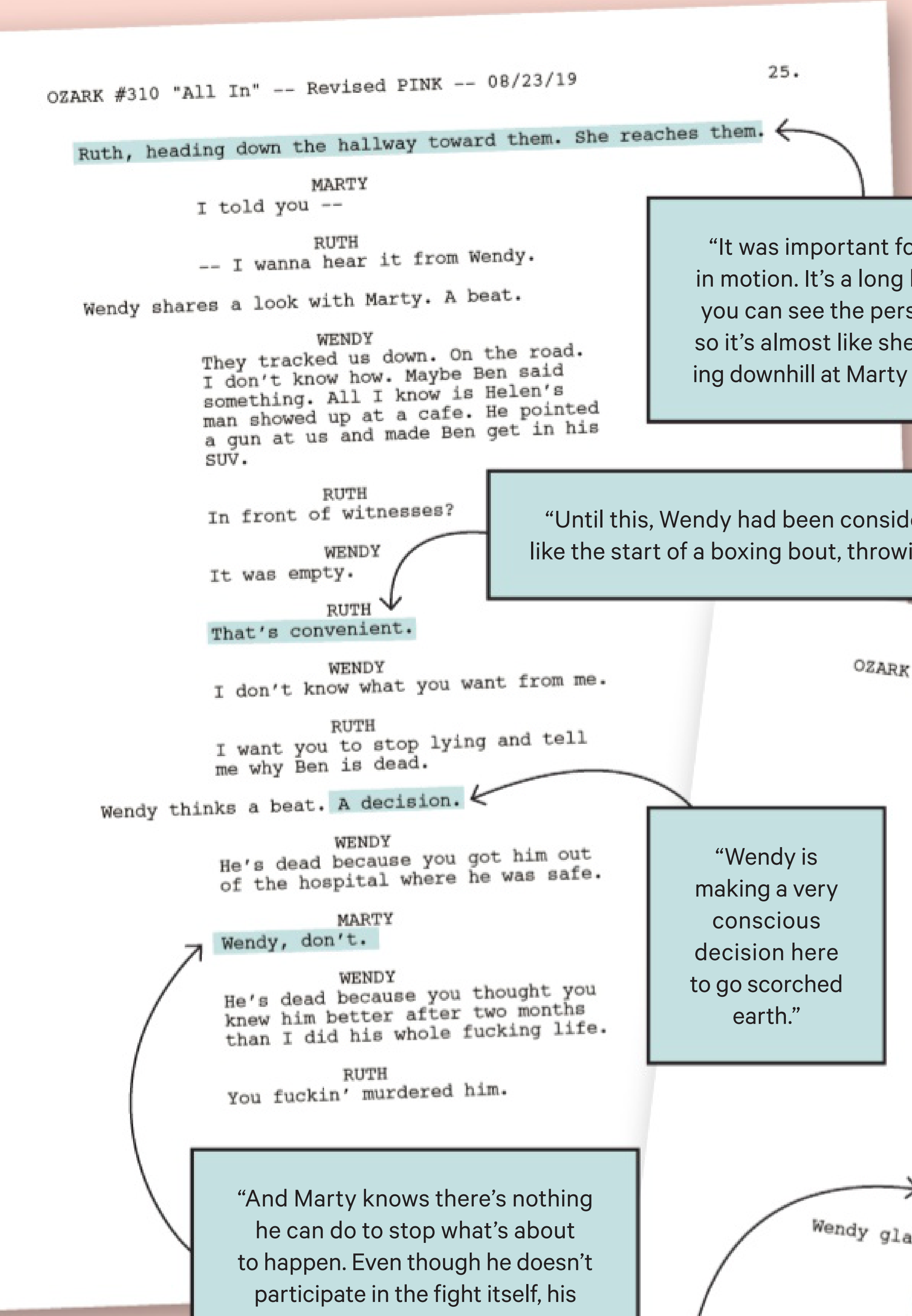
Mrs. America



The comedian stole every scene as the righteous but resentful Betty Friedan, whose heyday in feminism's Second Wave had come and gone. Her debate against Cate Blanchett's Phyllis Schlafly — which ends in one snarl too many from Friedan — was an acting master class in a series full of them.

SCRIPTING HELL AND HEAVEN

Two nominated writers reveal how they crafted poignant scenes in their finales, from an insult-spewing battle on *Ozark* to a sweet attempt to hold on to a loved one in *The Good Place* **BY REBECCA FORD**



OZARK #310 "All In" -- Revised PINK -- 08/23/19 25.

Ruth, heading down the hallway toward them. She reaches them.

MARTY
I told you --

RUTH
-- I wanna hear it from Wendy.

Wendy shares a look with Marty. A beat.

WENDY
They tracked us down. On the road. I don't know how. Maybe Ben said something. All I know is Helen's man showed up at a cafe. He pointed a gun at us and made Ben get in his SUV.

RUTH
In front of witnesses?

WENDY
It was empty.

RUTH
That's convenient.

WENDY
I don't know what you want from me.

RUTH
I want you to stop lying and tell me why Ben is dead.

Wendy thinks a beat. A decision.

WENDY
He's dead because you got him out of the hospital where he was safe.

MARTY
Wendy, don't.

WENDY
He's dead because you thought you knew him better after two months than I did his whole fucking life.

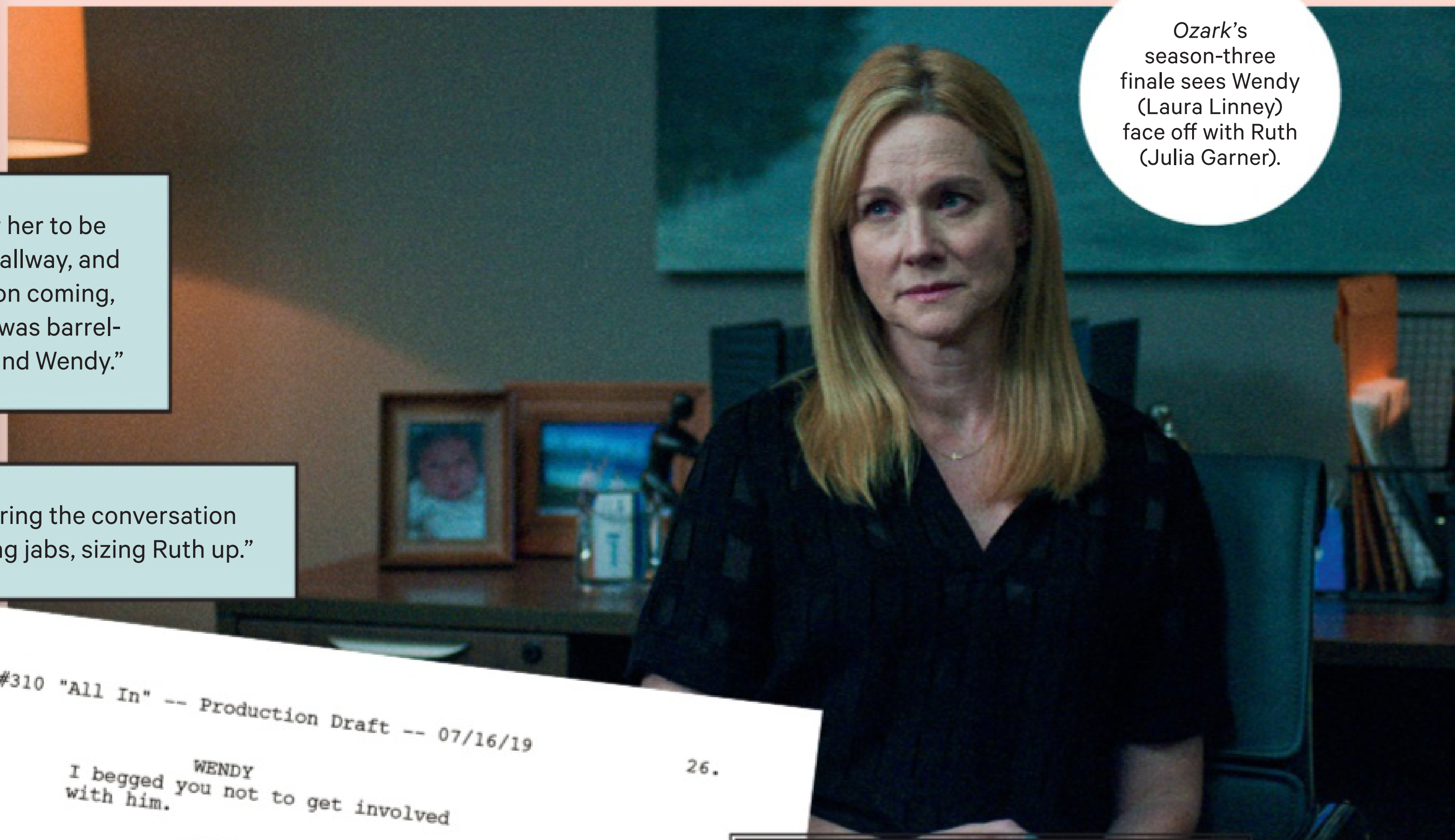
RUTH
You fuckin' murdered him.

"It was important for her to be in motion. It's a long hallway, and you can see the person coming, so it's almost like she was barreling downhill at Marty and Wendy."

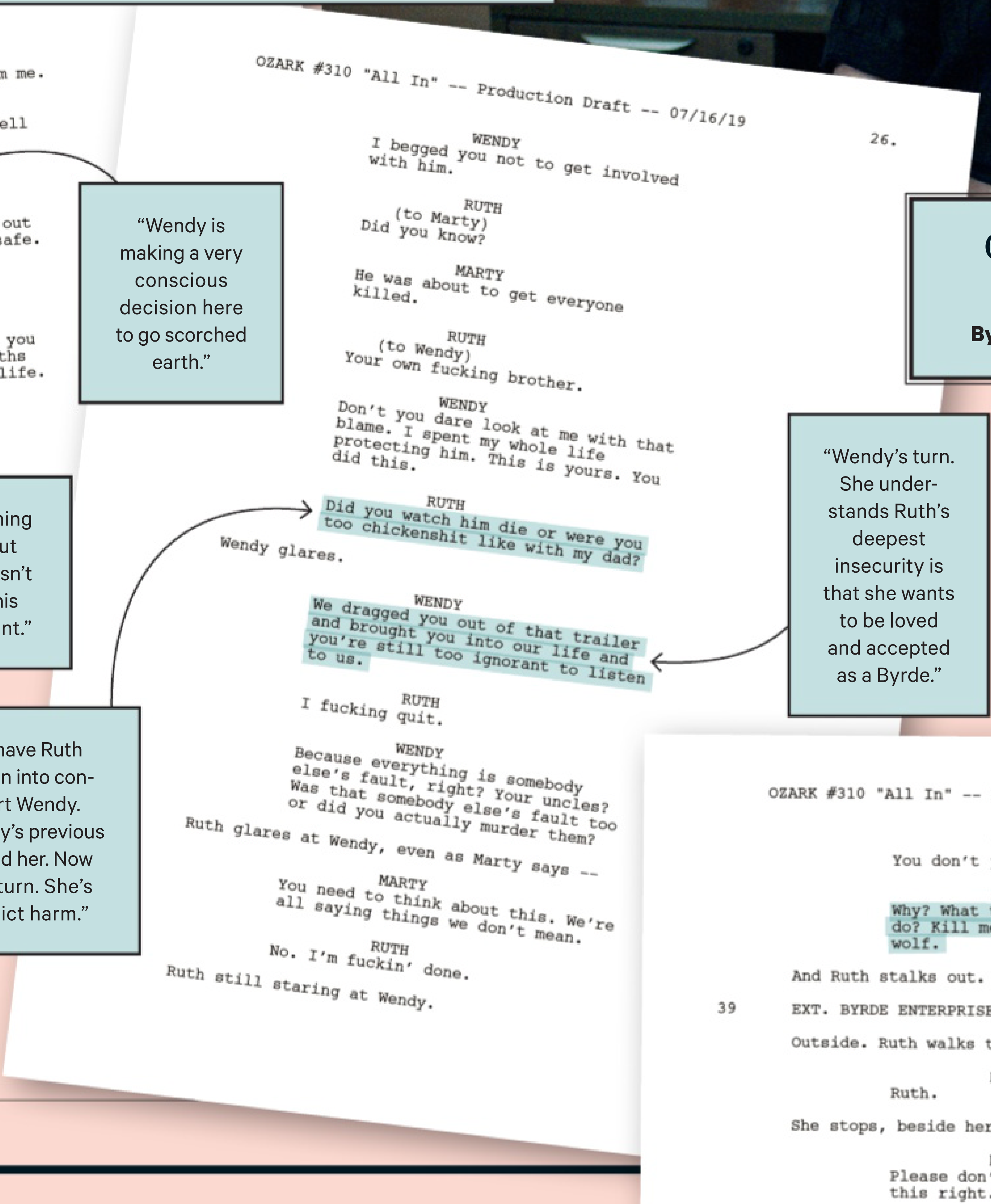
"Until this, Wendy had been considering the conversation like the start of a boxing bout, throwing jabs, sizing Ruth up."

"Wendy is making a very conscious decision here to go scorched earth."

"And Marty knows there's nothing he can do to stop what's about to happen. Even though he doesn't participate in the fight itself, his presence is incredibly important."



Ozark's season-three finale sees Wendy (Laura Linney) face off with Ruth (Julia Garner).



OZARK #310 "All In" -- Production Draft -- 07/16/19 26.

WENDY
I begged you not to get involved with him.

RUTH
(to Marty)
Did you know?

MARTY
He was about to get everyone killed.

RUTH
(to Wendy)
Your own fucking brother.

WENDY
Don't you dare look at me with that blame. I spent my whole life protecting him. This is yours. You did this.

RUTH
Did you watch him die or were you too chickenshit like with my dad?

Wendy glares.

WENDY
We dragged you out of that trailer and brought you into our life and you're still too ignorant to listen to us.

RUTH
I fucking quit.

WENDY
Because everything is somebody else's fault, right? Your uncles? Was that somebody else's fault too or did you actually murder them?

Ruth glares at Wendy, even as Marty says --

MARTY
You need to think about this. We're all saying things we don't mean.

RUTH
No. I'm fuckin' done.

Ruth still staring at Wendy.

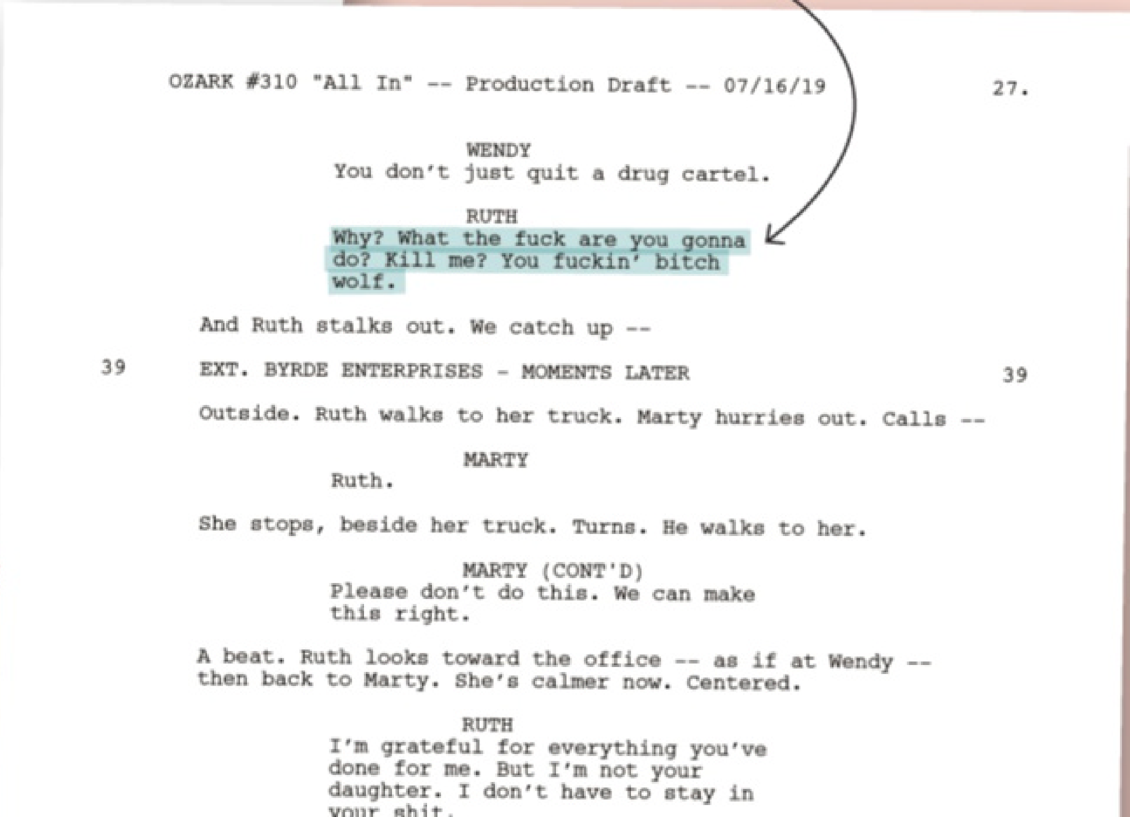
"It was important to have Ruth shift from pure emotion into consciously trying to hurt Wendy. She realizes from Wendy's previous line that she's wounded her. Now it's the point of no return. She's actively trying to inflict harm."

OZARK

Netflix
"All In"
By Chris Mundy

"Wendy's turn. She understands Ruth's deepest insecurity is that she wants to be loved and accepted as a Byrde."

"This is why writers rooms are so great — because when you're all talking over one another and getting excited about an idea, somebody might say the words 'bitch wolf' and you're there to write them down."



OZARK #310 "All In" -- Production Draft -- 07/16/19 27.

WENDY
You don't just quit a drug cartel.

RUTH
Why? What the fuck are you gonna do? Kill me? You fuckin' bitch wolf.

And Ruth stalks out. We catch up --

39 EXT. BYRDE ENTERPRISES - MOMENTS LATER 39

Outside. Ruth walks to her truck. Marty hurries out. Calls --

MARTY
Ruth.

She stops, beside her truck. Turns. He walks to her.

MARTY (CONT'D)
Please don't do this. We can make this right.

A beat. Ruth looks toward the office -- as if at Wendy -- then back to Marty. She's calmer now. Centered.

RUTH
I'm grateful for everything you've done for me. But I'm not your daughter. I don't have to stay in your shit.

Ozark is produced by MRC Television, which shares a parent company with *THR*.

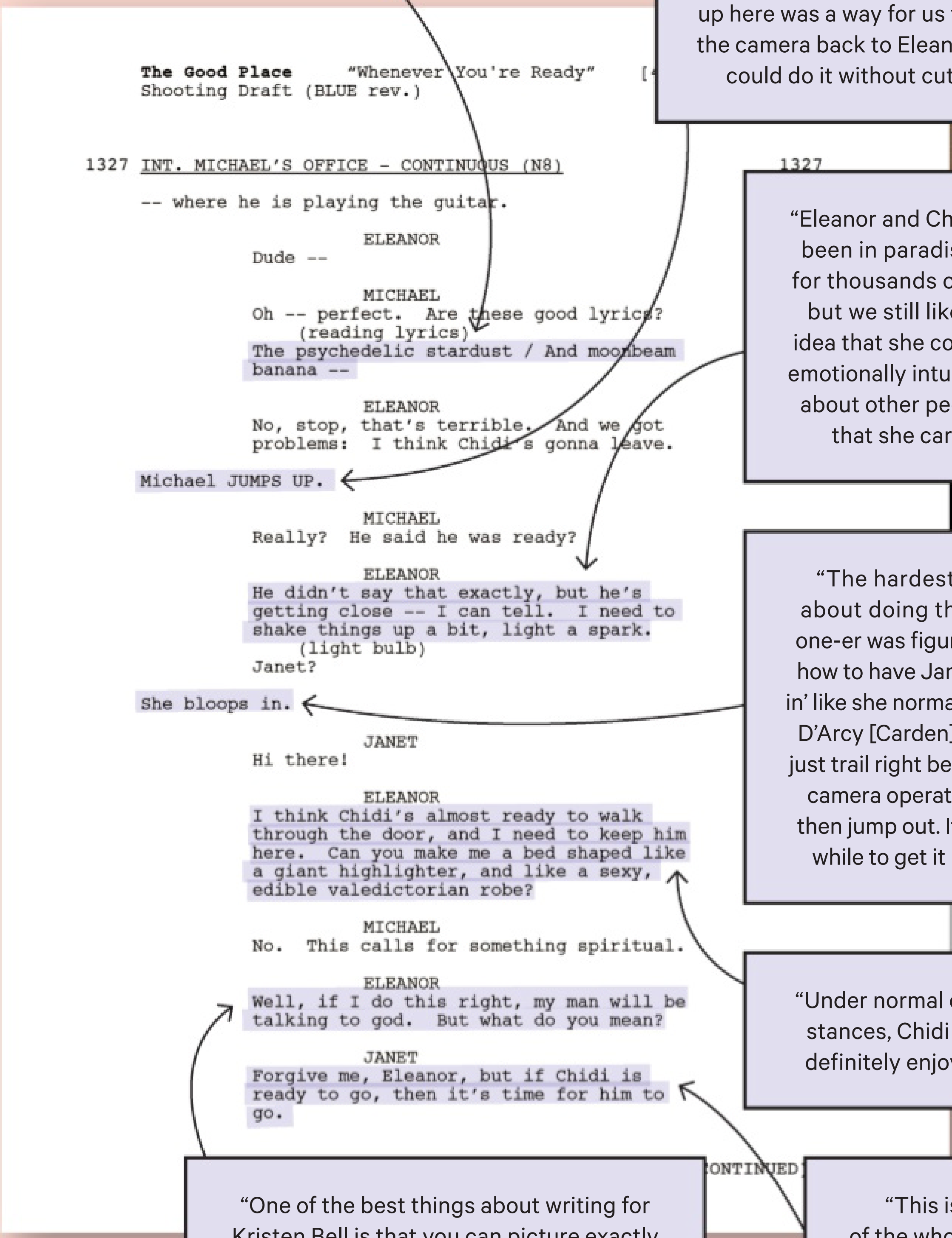
In *The* *Good Place*’s series finale, Michael (Ted Danson) has taken up human hobbies like guitar.

THE GOOD PLACE

NBC

“Whenever You’re Ready”

By Michael Schur



The Good Place “Whenever You're Ready” [4
Shooting Draft (BLUE rev.)

1327 INT. MICHAEL’S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS (N8) 1327

-- where he is playing the guitar.

ELEANOR
Dude --

MICHAEL
Oh -- perfect. Are these good lyrics?
(reading lyrics)
The psychedelic stardust / And moonbeam banana --

ELEANOR
No, stop, that’s terrible. And we got problems: I think Chidi’s gonna leave.

Michael JUMPS UP.

MICHAEL
Really? He said he was ready?

ELEANOR
He didn’t say that exactly, but he’s getting close -- I can tell. I need to shake things up a bit, light a spark.
(light bulb)
Janet?

She bloops in.

JANET
Hi there!

ELEANOR
I think Chidi’s almost ready to walk through the door, and I need to keep him here. Can you make me a bed shaped like a giant highlighter, and like a sexy, edible valedictorian robe?

MICHAEL
No. This calls for something spiritual.

ELEANOR
Well, if I do this right, my man will be talking to god. But what do you mean?

JANET
Forgive me, Eleanor, but if Chidi is ready to go, then it’s time for him to go.

ONTINUED)

“It’s been a running joke for a while that Michael was into 1960s psychedelic pop. Our composer, David Schwartz, took these lyrics and composed a full song in that genre, and it’s delightful.”

“We designed this sequence to be shot as a one-er, so when we blocked it, Michael popping up here was a way for us to swing the camera back to Eleanor so we could do it without cutting.”

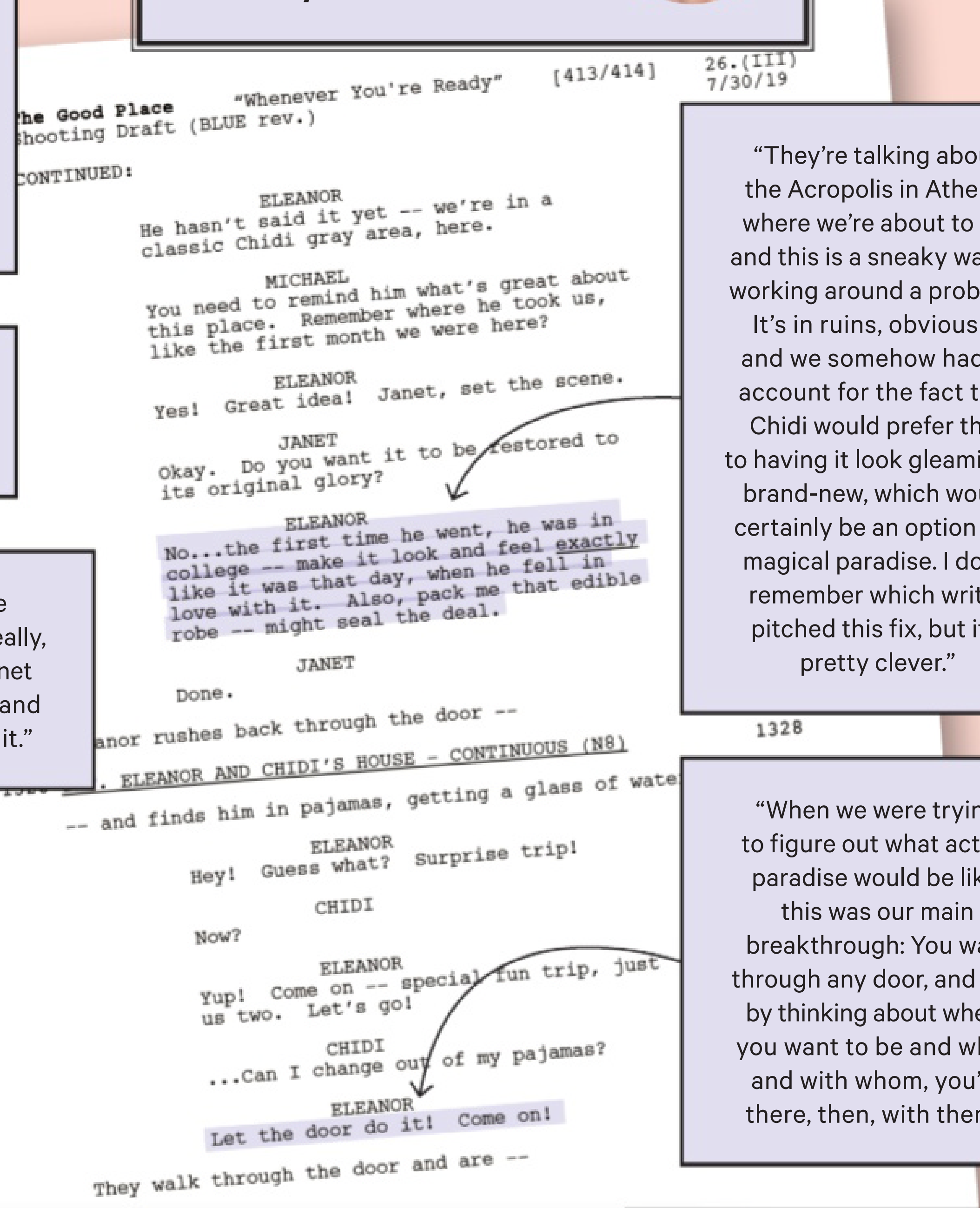
“Eleanor and Chidi have been in paradise now for thousands of years, but we still liked the idea that she could just emotionally intuit things about other people — that she cared.”

“The hardest part about doing this as a one-er was figuring out how to have Janet ‘pop in’ like she normally does. D’Arcy [Carden] had to just trail right behind the camera operator and then jump out. It took a while to get it right.”

“Under normal circumstances, Chidi would definitely enjoy this.”

“One of the best things about writing for Kristen Bell is that you can picture exactly how she’s going to say a line, and how funny it’ll be, and then she does it exactly that way, and it’s exactly that funny.”

“This is the theme of the whole finale, really, and we liked that Janet just drops it in here and Eleanor blows past it.”



he Good Place “Whenever You're Ready” [413/414] 26.(III)
hooting Draft (BLUE rev.) 7/30/19

CONTINUED:

ELEANOR
He hasn’t said it yet -- we’re in a classic Chidi gray area, here.

MICHAEL
You need to remind him what’s great about this place. Remember where he took us, like the first month we were here?

ELEANOR
Yes! Great idea! Janet, set the scene.

JANET
Okay. Do you want it to be restored to its original glory?

ELEANOR
No...the first time he went, he was in college -- make it look and feel exactly like it was that day, when he fell in love with it. Also, pack me that edible robe -- might seal the deal.

JANET
Done.

anor rushes back through the door --

. ELEANOR AND CHIDI’S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS (N8) 1328

-- and finds him in pajamas, getting a glass of wate

ELEANOR
Hey! Guess what? Surprise trip!

CHIDI
Now?

ELEANOR
Yup! Come on -- special fun trip, just us two. Let’s go!

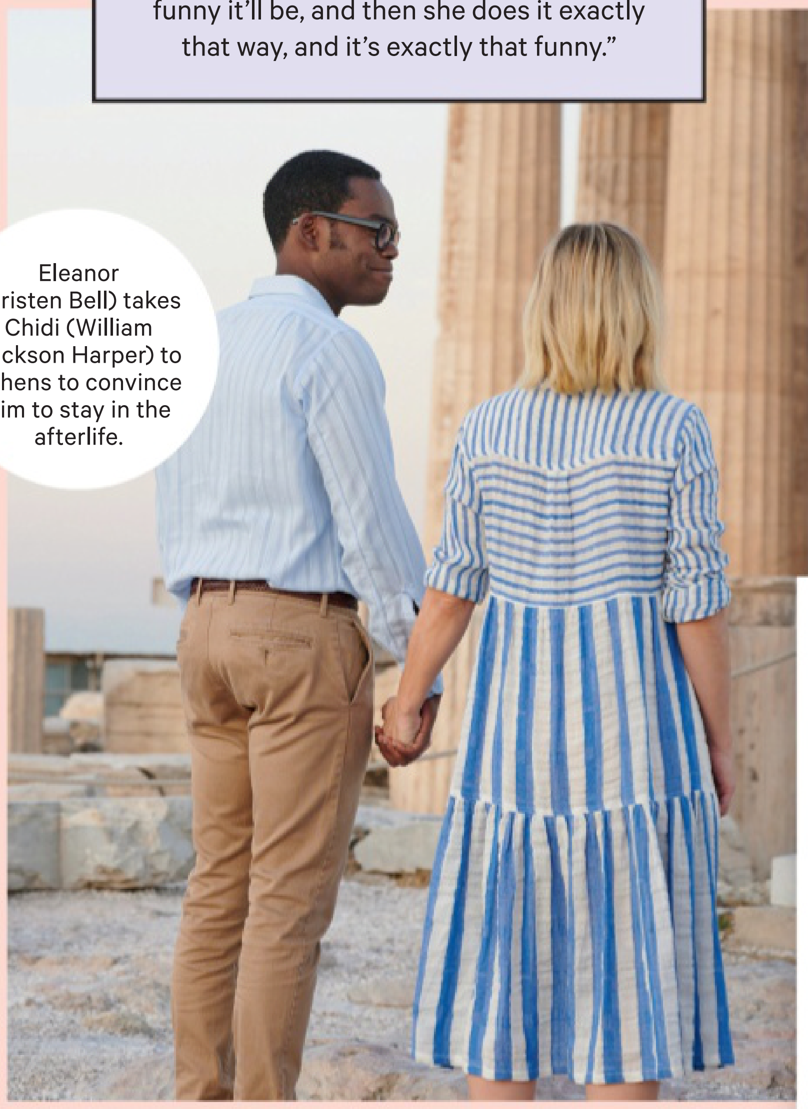
CHIDI
...Can I change out of my pajamas?

ELEANOR
Let the door do it! Come on!

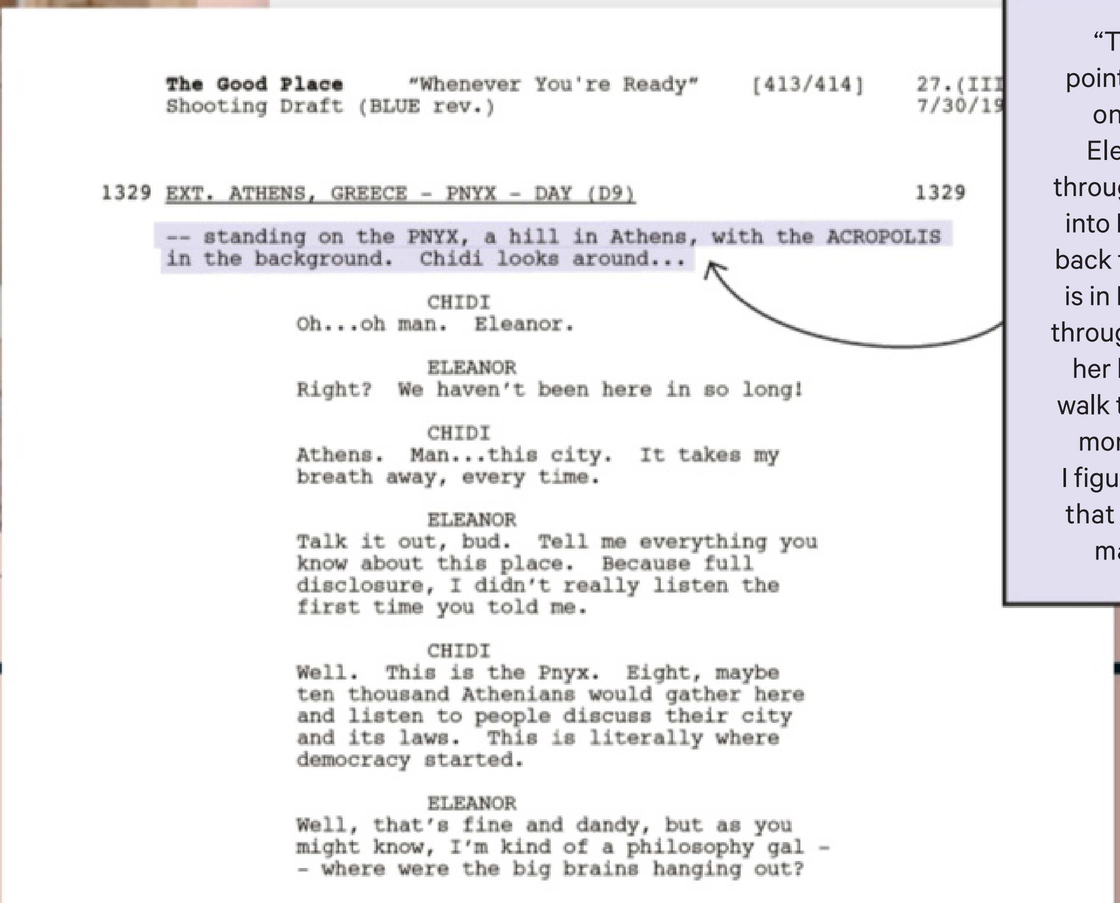
They walk through the door and are --

“They’re talking about the Acropolis in Athens, where we’re about to be, and this is a sneaky way of working around a problem: It’s in ruins, obviously, and we somehow had to account for the fact that Chidi would prefer that to having it look gleamingly brand-new, which would certainly be an option in a magical paradise. I don’t remember which writer pitched this fix, but it’s pretty clever.”

“When we were trying to figure out what actual paradise would be like, this was our main breakthrough: You walk through any door, and just by thinking about where you want to be and when and with whom, you’re there, then, with them.”



Eleanor (Kristen Bell) takes Chidi (William Jackson Harper) to Athens to convince him to stay in the afterlife.



The Good Place “Whenever You're Ready” [413/414] 27.(III
Shooting Draft (BLUE rev.) 7/30/19

1329 EXT. ATHENS, GREECE - PNYX - DAY (D9) 1329

-- standing on the PNYX, a hill in Athens, with the ACROPOLIS in the background. Chidi looks around...

CHIDI
Oh...oh man. Eleanor.

ELEANOR
Right? We haven’t been here in so long!

CHIDI
Athens. Man...this city. It takes my breath away, every time.

ELEANOR
Talk it out, bud. Tell me everything you know about this place. Because full disclosure, I didn’t really listen the first time you told me.

CHIDI
Well. This is the Pnyx. Eight, maybe ten thousand Athenians would gather here and listen to people discuss their city and its laws. This is literally where democracy started.

ELEANOR
Well, that’s fine and dandy, but as you might know, I’m kind of a philosophy gal -- where were the big brains hanging out?

“This was really the whole point of doing this sequence in one shot — we start with Eleanor and Chidi walking through a door from a restaurant into Eleanor’s house, she walks back through the same door and is in Michael’s office, then back through the same door again into her house, then she and Chidi walk through the same door one more time and are in Athens. I figured that if we could pull off that sequence, it would really make it feel like heaven.”

OZARK: COURTESY OF NETFLIX. MUNDY: EMMA MCINTYRE/GETTY IMAGES FOR NETFLIX. BELL: VANIAS XYDAS/NBC. DANSON: COLLEEN HAYES/NBC. SCHUR: GABRIEL OLSEN/WIREIMAGE.

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Reviews

Television

Sarah Edmondson, one of NXIVM's highest-profile defectors.

The Vow

Jehane Noujaim and Karim Amer direct HBO's effective and sympathetic deep-dive docuseries about the notorious Hollywood-adjacent NXIVM cult

By Inkoo Kang

When the exposés about NXIVM — a self-help group and pyramid scheme founded in 1998 that served as a recruitment pool for a sex cult that branded its "slaves" — went nationwide in 2017 and 2018, the stories were shocking even in the midst of the #MeToo movement.

But they were also confusing. Headlines seized on the branding — and the involvement of *Smallville* actress Allison Mack, who had effectively retired shortly after the series' wrap and moved to Albany, New York, where NXIVM (pronounced nex-ee-um) was headquartered. The details about life in the group — starvation diets, lifetime vows of service, nude photos as "collateral" — were outrageous and, for many outsiders, bewildering. Why would anyone put up with such mistreatment? And why would they do so for so long?

HBO's nine-part docuseries *The Vow* seeks to answer precisely those questions. Directed by Oscar-nominated husband-and-wife team Karim Amer and Jehane Noujaim (*The Great Hack*, *The Square*), it's the highest-profile deep dive into NXIVM to date. Each of the first six hourlong episodes sent to critics focuses on a different defector, their experiences adding up to a "character"-based history and explanation of the billionaire-backed organization. The specifics of the group are both bone-chillingly familiar to critics of gendered cult dynamics and wildly idiosyncratic to guru Keith Raniere, whose initials — along with Mack's — were branded on the pelvic region of possibly dozens of women. Ex-member Sarah Edmondson, the "star" of the excellent CBC podcast *Uncover: Escaping NXIVM*, claims that her branding took place at the *Smallville* co-star's home.

A clarification: NXIVM was an umbrella group for several organizations dedicated to disparate missions. Executive Success Programs, or "ESP," was a personal-development course that seems to have been the gateway for many NXIVM members; about 15,000 individuals have taken ESP classes. Active NXIVM membership was between 700 and 800 people, of which less than a tenth were invited to join Dominus Obsequious Sororium (DOS), a female-only group allegedly founded by Raniere and Mack. An anonymous former member recalls having to ask her "master" for permission to eat virtually every bite of food. It's shocking to be reminded that all enforcers of DOS — the brander, the ones pressuring underlings to submit nude photos and the ones claiming sex with Raniere was the key to enlightenment — are women.

An ongoing curiosity about NXIVM is how Raniere and his female deputies twisted the language of women's empowerment to mold recruits into sexual partners for him. (His type seems to be young, blond, thin and grateful — one woman recalls that Raniere wooed her but wouldn't sleep with her until she lost weight.) *The Vow* is particularly compelling in outlining the methods that NXIVM used to break down new recruits, which included framing brainwashing techniques, like forcing a member to sleep only two hours a night, as a test of (female) strength and will. The filmmakers appear to argue, as does Edmondson more explicitly, that understanding NXIVM means not only knowing about the behavior of its leader and top lieutenants — but also understanding the grooming process that systematically broke down the resistance of aspirants. (Mack pleaded guilty to racketeering charges in 2019 and is awaiting sentencing. Raniere faces life in prison for a slew of convictions that same year, including sex trafficking, child exploitation, possession of child pornography and forced labor.)

An early protagonist of *The Vow* is *What the Bleep Do We Know!?* director Mark Vicente, who hoped to make Raniere's teachings more accessible through film. It's unclear how Noujaim and Amer got their hands on so many NXIVM videos — both pro and home-video-style footage of group events — though some of the material is certainly supplied by Vicente and his wife, Bonnie Piesse. (After defecting, the couple installed cameras all over their home and recorded every call with cult members; Raniere is known to retaliate aggressively against apostates, with the help of two members of the politically connected Bronfmans, billionaire heiresses to the Seagram fortune.)

The generous peppering of insider NXIVM videos throughout *The Vow* renders the dorky, soft-spoken Raniere (who appears not to have participated in the series) a thoroughly unimpressive figure, while providing visual relief from the many talking-head interviews. Overall, the production is handsome and well structured, with each episode unearthing new layers of viciousness and manipulation.

Like Lifetime's *Surviving R. Kelly* and Showtime's *Love Fraud*, *The Vow* chronicles an attempted rescue mission — here, of India Oxenberg, daughter of *Dynasty* actress Catherine Oxenberg. Edmondson and Vicente, racked with guilt for their contributions to NXIVM, aid the elder Oxenberg, but sadly, can't help much. The mother-daughter rupture testifies powerfully to the uphill battle of convincing someone that their purpose in life, for which they've made unimaginable sacrifices, has been nothing more than a grimy lie.

AIRDATE 10 p.m. Sunday, Aug. 23 (HBO)
DIRECTORS Jehane Noujaim and Karim Amer

COURTESY OF HBO

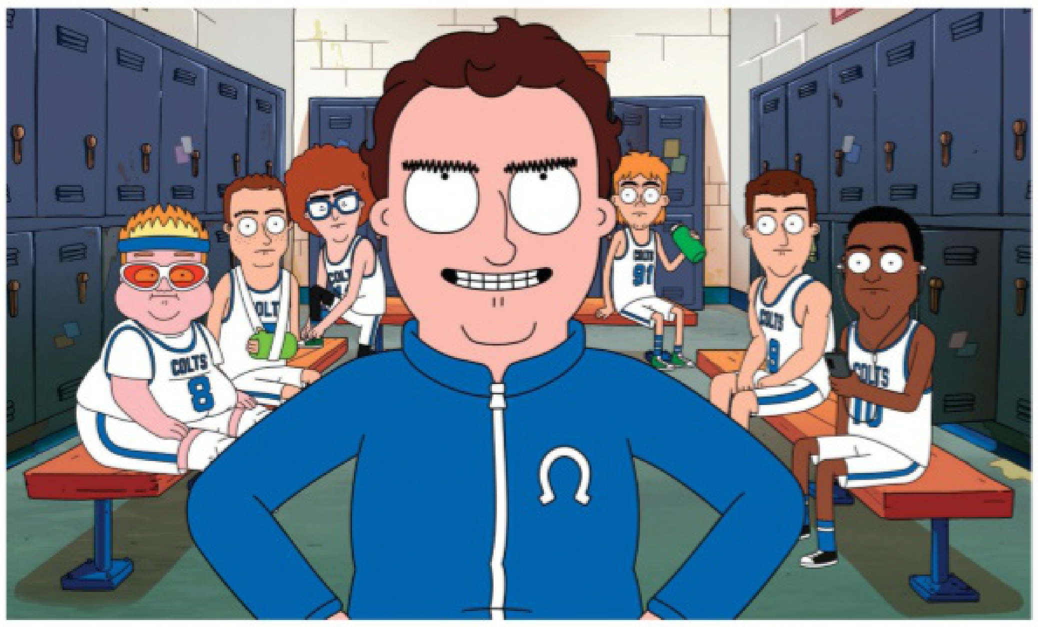
Hoops

Netflix's new adult animated comedy about a high school basketball team is heavy on coarseness, light on heart

By Daniel Fienberg

Stand-up favorite Ron Funches is one of TV's stealthiest MVPs, especially for his work in the animated space: His upbeat King Shark is a scene-stealer in DC Universe's terrific *Harley Quinn,* and all he has to do is pop up in something like Apple TV+'s *Central Park* to guarantee mirth.

Funches is, once again, a gem in Netflix's animated comedy *Hoops*, playing a bighearted assistant basketball coach dating his best friend's soon-to-be ex-wife. But, like many Funches projects, *Hoops* suffers from not putting its best asset front and center — and also from its larger struggle to find heart in a story filled with awful, foulmouthed cartoon people.



Jake Johnson heads the voice cast as coach of a losing Kentucky high school basketball team.

Created by Ben Hoffman — with Phil Lord and Christopher Miller among its executive producers — *Hoops* is the story of Ben Hopkins (Jake Johnson), who coaches a dismal high school basketball team in Kentucky. Ben lives in the shadow of his father, Barry (Rob Riggle), a former NBA player, and works alongside his aforementioned best friend (Funches' Ron), who's dating his aforementioned ex-wife (Natasha Leggero's Shannon). It's all Ben can do to keep his job, but he fantasizes about coaching in the NBA, imagining socially awkward 7-footer Matty (A.D. Miles) as his meal ticket.

In its first few episodes, *Hoops* coasts on coarseness — lots of swearing and relentless mockery of Ben's team. There's little room for affection to build for any of the characters, though there's a certain genius in how Johnson (also an executive producer here) delivers Ben's sputtering rage.

Eventually *Hoops* starts digging deeper into its ensemble, animated in amusingly bowlegged, high-crotched fashion by Bento Box — especially in the eighth episode, which offers helpful backstories for several characters. Guest voices are a boon, including Johnson's *New Girl* colleagues Max Greenfield and Hannah Simone, plus Lord & Miller alum Will Forte, whose cameo as a frog-licking guru is a highlight.

When it isn't relying on obscenities, political incorrectness or double entendres relating to balls, *Hoops* has a solid grasp on callbacks. A running joke tied to *Little Man Tate* made me chuckle, as did musical interludes in the vein of Hoffman's profane musical alter ego, Wheeler Walker Jr.

By the 10th half-hour episode (the full season was sent to critics), there's enough going right to make one hopeful about future seasons, but it still feels like a disappointment given its pedigree. At the very least, *Hoops* passes the time until somebody gives Funches his own show. THR

AIRDATE Friday, Aug. 21 (Netflix)
CAST Jake Johnson, Rob Riggle, Natasha Leggero, Ron Funches, Cleo King, A.D. Miles
CREATOR Ben Hoffman

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CHILDREN OF MEN*
JUDY*
PADDINGTON 2*
EMMA*

BUDAPEST NOIR*
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LONDON FILM SCHOOL

Bryan Cranston plays the proprietor of a struggling circus whose main draw is the titular gorilla.

The One and Only Ivan

Sam Rockwell and Angelina Jolie lend their voices to this tender Disney film about a circus gorilla confronting his past **By Michael Rechtshaffen**

Far fairer than *Artemis Fowl*, the previous live-action/CGI hybrid to be rerouted from theaters to Disney+, *The One and Only Ivan* is a restrained and soulful portrait of a gorilla re-evaluating his life as a mall circus performer. Based on the 2013 novel by Katherine Applegate, the production offers a stirring take on the theme of belonging, fine voice work from Sam Rockwell in the title role and intimate cinematography by Florian Ballhaus.

Bryan Cranston plays Mack, the weary ringmaster of a struggling circus. His 400-pound star attraction, Ivan, begins wondering if he's lost his chest-pounding edge ("Why do they want an angry gorilla anyway?"), spending off-hours hanging with the aging Stella (Angelina Jolie), a soft-spoken elephant, and Bob (Danny DeVito), a scrappy, loyal mutt. But the arrival of Ruby (Brooklynn Prince), a baby elephant who Mack is hoping will turn things around, forces Ivan to confront his long-repressed past.

There's a poignant melancholy — reminiscent of *Charlotte's Web* — in the screenplay by Mike White, measured direction by Thea Sharrock (*Me Before You*) and thoughtful performances. Rockwell brings something fresh-feeling to the philosophical Ivan, who discovers a surprising aptitude for drawing when he's given broken crayons by the daughter (Ariana Greenblatt) of Mack's production assistant (Ramon Rodriguez). Jolie invests her fragile pachyderm with a gentle wisdom, while Cranston makes you feel Mack's world crumbling around him in a performance that easily could have flirted with cartoon villainy in less accomplished hands.

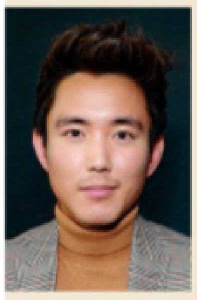
Charged with lightening the mood are a lively supporting menagerie, among them a strutting chicken (Chaka Khan) and Mack's pampered poodle (Helen Mirren in a pitch-perfect, if underutilized, voice turn).

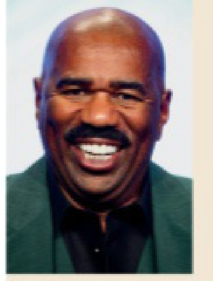
Underscoring the introspective mood are composer Craig Armstrong's subdued musical themes and the end-credits Diane Warren contribution, "Free," performed by Charlie Puth. The CGI touches, meanwhile, are highly expressive.

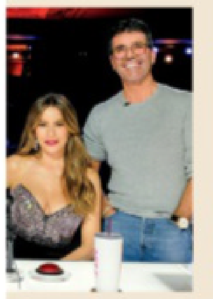
AIRDATE Friday, Aug. 21 (Disney+)
CAST Sam Rockwell, Angelina Jolie, Danny DeVito, Helen Mirren, Brooklyn Prince, Bryan Cranston
DIRECTOR Thea Sharrock
Rated PG, 83 minutes

THR'S SOCIAL CLIMBERS

A ranking of the week's top actors, TV personalities and unscripted shows based on social media engagement across Instagram, Twitter, Facebook and more

This Week		Last Week	Actors
1	↑	4	Will Smith
2	↔	2	Dwayne Johnson
3	↔	3	Millie Bobby Brown
4	↑	9	Priyanka Chopra Jonas
5	↑	19	Sabrina Carpenter
6	↑	-	Camila Mendes
7	↑	23	Lili Reinhart
8	↑	-	**Viola Davis** Davis seemed to get a kick out of an edit of Cardi B and Megan Thee Stallion's viral "WAP" video that pasted Davis' face onto one of the clip's scantily clad bodies. Her tweet about it was favorited 420,000 times.
9	↓	6	George Takei
10	↓	1	Jennifer Lopez
11	↑	16	Kevin Hart
12	↑	-	Vanessa Hudgens
13	↓	5	Ice Cube
14	↓	7	Dove Cameron
15	↑	18	Alyssa Milano
16	↑	-	Nina Dobrev
17	↓	15	Deepika Padukone
18	↑	25	Madison Bailey
19	↑	-	**Justin H. Min**  Min debuts a spot ahead of fellow *Umbrella Academy* star Aidan Gallagher, garnering a 35 percent boost in overall social engagement while posting about the show's newly aired second season on Netflix.
20	↑	-	Aidan Gallagher
21	↓	17	Debby Ryan
22	↑	-	Reese Witherspoon
23	↓	10	Emily Ratajkowski
24	↑	-	Tracee Ellis Ross
25	↑	-	Brie Larson

This Week		Last Week	TV Personalities
1	↑	-	**Steve Harvey**  After the birth of his newest grandchild, Harvey vaults back to No. 1 on Top TV Personalities for the first time since May 2018. His posts about grandson Joey contributed to 1.2 million Facebook likes to his account in all.
2	↑	5	Gordon Ramsay
3	↑	-	Maria Celeste Arraras
4	↓	1	Mike Huckabee
5	↓	2	Ree Drummond
6	↓	3	Ellen DeGeneres
7	↑	-	Liz Wheeler
8	↑	-	Adamari Lopez
9	↑	-	Bill Maher
10	↓	7	Trevor Noah

This Week		Last Week	Unscripted TV
1	↑	3	**America's Got Talent**  Clips of performances from the talent show's previous 15 seasons — as part of its 15th anniversary special that aired Aug. 4 — helped draw a 96 percent gain in overall social engagement to the NBC series' accounts.
2	↔	2	World of Dance
3	↑	5	Big Brother
4	↓	1	America's Funniest ...
5	↑	7	Chrisley Knows Best
6	↔	6	RuPaul's Drag Race
7	↑	-	The Incredible Dr. Pol
8	↑	10	Caso Cerrado
9	↑	-	Impractical Jokers
10	↑	-	Jersey Shore

Data Compiled By

Source: The week's most active and talked-about entertainers on leading social networking sites Facebook, Google Plus, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube for the week ending Aug. 11. Rankings are based on a formula blending weekly additions of fans as well as cumulative weekly reactions and conversations, as tracked by MVP.

IVAN: COURTESY OF DISNEY+. HARVEY: FREDERICK M. BROWN/GETTY IMAGES. DAVIS: JEROD HARRIS/FILMMAGIC. *TALENT*: JUSTIN LUBIN/NBC. MIN: RICH FURY/GETTY IMAGES.

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Top 25 Film Schools

From left: Dodge Hall, Columbia University; Warner Bros. Building at AFI; UCLA's Royce Hall.

The Top 25 Film Schools in America A career behind the camera begins at these elite institutions (even as COVID-19 complicates curricula)

By Mia Galuppo and Kirsten Chuba

With both entertainment and higher education deeply impacted by the COVID-19 shutdown, top film schools across the U.S. spent the summer break reassessing established curricula. Many programs are moving classes completely online to comply with local and state health restrictions (student films will mostly be shot on cellphones and star family members and roommates). Colleges, universities and conservatories alike are filling in the gaps in their promised programs with Zoom lectures from top talents like **Taika Waititi** and **Spike Lee**, and are hoping to hold makeup physical production classes over the spring and summer breaks in 2021, assuming the world returns to relative normality by then.

But no matter how they are handling the pandemic, all of *The Hollywood Reporter*'s top film programs are committed to ensuring their graduates will be ready for a career in Hollywood — whatever it may look like. Whether it's adding new virtual and augmented reality labs (like the University of California Los Angeles), or offering more courses in Black film theory (USC, Chapman, CalArts and UT Austin are among the schools to do so), these programs aim to evolve with the industry and educate the storytellers and executives who will shape the future of entertainment — even if that future is currently on hold.

1 AMERICAN FILM INSTITUTE

LOS ANGELES

After much turnover in the dean's office, **Susan Ruskin** took over the reins of the famed conservatory just in time for The American Film Institute's 50th anniversary and a major year of awards and endowments. She replaces Richard Gladstein, who stepped in after Jan Schuette left in 2016. The school swept the narrative category at last year's Student Academy Awards, picking up the gold, silver and bronze honors, and had a similar showing at the DGA Student Awards, winning three of its four eligible categories. Alums and industry professionals note that the grad-student-focused conservatory guarantees students the opportunity to make their own films, with plenty of support. Alum **Max Barbakow**, whose Sundance feature *Palm Springs* sold to Neon/Hulu for a record-setting sum in Park City, says the conservatory excels at "empowering young filmmakers to make stuff," adding that "the opportunity to dive in and make three substantial short films in my first year was undoubtedly the boon of the AFI experience."

Ruskin

CAMERAS, PEOPLE: ADOBE STOCK (6). COLUMBIA, AFI: COURTESY OF SUBJECT. UCLA: TED SOQUI/CORBIS VIA GETTY IMAGES. RUSKIN: TOMMASO BODDI/GETTY IMAGES.

Its strong alumni network includes veteran helmer **Mimi Leder** and *Midsommar* director **Ari Aster**, and, thanks to a $3 million gift from trustee emeritus **Lawrence Herbert**, the school plans to boost alums with a new physical Alumni Center and a digital portal, called AFI Backlot, designed to expand the center's global reach to alumni. Even by oft-inflated film school standards, AFI offers an expensive education but hopes to continue to offset some tuition and production costs with a new $15,000 Bridges/Larson Production Award and the T.R. Paul Family Foundation Scholarship, and has seen an overall increase in gifts to its general scholarship fund, including installments from **Bob Daly**, **Alan Horn** and **David Geffen**.

TUITION $63,575 TO $65,800 GRAD

ALUMNI **David Lynch, Ari Aster, Julie Dash**

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2 USC

LOS ANGELES

While most film schools focus on the creative and technical side of filmmaking, few cater to students looking to become execs or producers. USC's renowned School of Cinematic Arts, which encompasses roughly 1,000 undergraduates and 700 grads, focuses on both disciplines, with a track record to prove it. SCA boasts both Marvel movie director **Ryan Coogler** and head of Marvel Studios **Kevin Feige** as alums. In the last school year, SCA established the John H. Mitchell Endowment for the Business of Entertainment chair — William Morris agency alum **Bonnie Chi** is the inaugural holder — and the school's Peter Stark producing program celebrated its 40th anniversary with past grads who include UTA co-president **David Kramer**. "Rely on the talent and insights of your peers, the people you trust and respect," says **Nahnatchka Khan**, the creative force behind *Fresh Off the Boat* and *Always Be My Maybe*, on the lessons she learned at SCA. "Keep in close contact with them, keep it real, and you will all lift each other up and hit new heights together." As Hollywood tries to uproot entrenched systems of racism and sexism, the school has made a new class a requirement for all students: Visions of Diversity in the Cinematic Arts, which looks at cinema and television history through the lenses of equality and inclusion.

Khan

TUITION $59,260 UNDERGRADUATE; $39,900 GRAD

ALUMNI **Robert Zemeckis, Doug Liman, Shonda Rhimes**

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3 NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

NEW YORK

After an online spring semester of Zoom calls with auteurs like **Taika Waititi** and **Darren Aronofsky**, New York University students will partially return to campus this fall with a hybrid approach, and international and L.A. students will have the option to study at one of its global network of campuses. In addition to welcoming Oscar-winning producer **Donna Gigliotti** (*Shakespeare in Love*) and nominated sound mixer **Tod Maitland** (*Joker*) to its graduate school faculty, its undergrad program has added classes in storytelling with a modern twist ("Aristotle to Beyoncé and Beyond") and bulked up on its state-of-the-art equipment with new Alexa Mini cameras. Spike Lee, who is a professor at the school, also established a production fund that gives annual grants to student filmmakers, and the newly launched Black Family Film Prize awards $150,000 to grad students whose film projects exemplify innovation in story, style and tone. Says *Watchmen* producer **Tiffany Chung**: "My years at NYU have accompanied me beyond graduation as I continue to grow and be inspired by my peers, both personally and professionally, in the collaborative world of storytelling."

TUITION $60,282 UNDERGRAD; $65,926 GRAD

ALUMNI **Martin Scorsese, Damon Lindelof, Nia DaCosta**

DIRECTOR, *CANDYMAN*

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4 COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

NEW YORK

The Ivy League MFA program, which will start this fall with a mix of online and in-person classes, will also return with a new commitment to diversity, inclusion and safe-space initiatives, focusing on the ways in which racism, privilege and inequity impact its community through facilitated discussion workshops. With programs for screenwriting-directing, creative producing and a growing emphasis on the production side, Columbia has been the starting ground for star alumni like Walt Disney Animation chief creative officer and *Frozen* writer-director **Jennifer Lee**, who says she chose the school "because it takes a holistic approach — you write, direct, edit, act and produce before specializing. I gained skills to complete every script I could imagine and learned the power of rewriting. In directing, emotion and character drove every shot and frame; in producing, I found the power of collaboration — it truly was everything I dreamt of and more."

TUITION $62,912 GRAD

ALUMNI **Kathryn Bigelow, Simon Kinberg, James Mangold**

THE *THR* RANKINGS: HOW IT'S DONE

First the magazine consults with a variety of educators, industry professionals, grads, current students and other experts to hear what insiders are saying. Then a team of reporters reaches out to campuses across the country to discover what's new since last year's rankings. All that reporting is then triangulated with other factors — student awards, alumni achievement, killer (or not) facilities — to determine the final rankings. In the interest of fairness, *THR* did not weigh how the schools on this list are adapting curricula to the COVID-19 crisis because, at time of publication, the situation remains fluid.

15 TOP INTERNATIONAL FILM SCHOOLS

From a Quarantine Stories film competition to on-set pod teams, colleges around the globe have quickly adapted to the COVID-19 crisis

AUSTRALIAN FILM, TELEVISION AND RADIO SCHOOL

This Sydney-based school has turned out an array of Oscar winners — writer-director **Jane Campion** (*The Piano*), **David White** (sound editing for *Mad Max: Fury Road*) and **Margaret Sixel** (editing *Mad Max: Fury Road*). As of August, most student activity had returned to campus, but the university was assessing health and safety conditions on a weekly basis in tandem with the Australian government.

BEIJING FILM ACADEMY

The incoming 2020 students at the Beijing Film Academy, China's most elite moviemaking institution, were required to submit to online admissions interviews this spring — including virtual auditions for coveted spots in the acting department — because of the pandemic. But thanks to China's highly effective domestic containment of the virus, classes will be held in person this fall.

CENTRO DE CAPACITACIÓN CINEMATOGRÁFICA

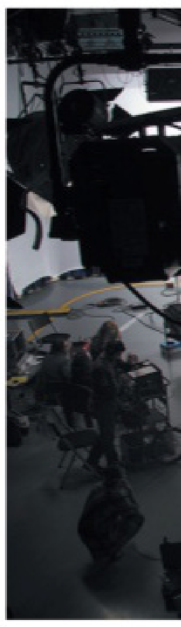
All classes have shifted online at Mexico's premiere film school, founded in 1975. As part of its virtual curriculum, the school is uploading films on the Mexican Film Institute's streaming platform as well as its own social media channels, with many new titles accessible for free.

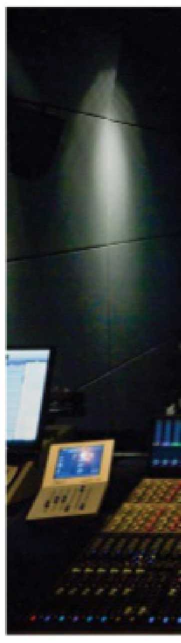
CENTRO SPERIMENTALE DI CINEMATOGRAFIA

Italy's National School of Cinema — offering courses across all film disciplines for anyone fluent in Italian — used the COVID-19 lockdown to start a program of distance learning for all its courses, which it claims has enhanced the level of teacher-pupil interaction.

ECAM

While 2020 might not have been the greatest year for the Madrid school to celebrate its 25th anniversary, it did launch three master's degree programs (executive production, postproduction coordination and TV script writing). During the coronavirus crisis, ECAM shifted its theoretical classes online and, once the lockdown was lifted, adapted its facilities so students could complete their shoots and practical exercises in safety.





AUSTRALIAN, HOCHSCHULE: COURTESY OF SUBJECT. SARANDOS: COURTESY OF CHAPMAN UNIVERSITY. KHAN: KEVIN WINTER/GETTY IMAGES.

From top: A production studio at the Australian Film, Television and Radio School; a sound editing suite at Germany's Hochschule für Film and Fernsehen.

HOCHSCHULE FÜR FILM AND FERNSEHEN

Germany has not yet reopened its universities for regular classes, but the country's No. 1 film school — whose alumni include the likes of **Wim Wenders**, **Roland Emmerich** and *Dark* director **Baran bo Odar** — has moved its courses online and is offering a combination of digital and in-person instruction.

LA FÉMIS

The French state film school was forced to close its Paris doors in early March during the COVID-19 lockdown. But its 11 departments adapted their training, with numerous online talks from various cinematographers, sound engineers and editors, alongside top directors such as **Michael Haneke** and **Damien Chazelle**.

LODZ FILM SCHOOL

Poland has weathered the COVID-19 crisis better than most and has begun reopening public institutions, including schools and universities, though the government has said it will shut things down again if infections spike.

LONDON FILM SCHOOL

The central London school this year saw its alumni land eight BAFTA TV Craft Award nominations (including for *The End of the F***ing World* showrunner **Jonathan Entwistle**). Adjusting to the lockdown, it moved its 66 staff off site and shifted to remote learning, brought its M.A. Filmmaking curriculum forward to avoid disruption and, ahead of students' return to class, refitted its premises to support social distancing.

NATIONAL FILM AND TELEVISION SCHOOL

The U.K.'s most famous film and TV college — whose alumni range from Oscar-winning industry veterans such as **Roger Deakins** to emerging stars like *1917* scribe **Krysty Wilson-Cairns** — expanded its offerings in 2020 with the addition of both casting and postproduction supervision courses. During the COVID-19 lockdown, the school offered almost daily Zoom master classes with the likes of **Judd Apatow**, **Elisabeth Moss**, **Steve McQueen** and **David Fincher**.

NATIONAL FILM SCHOOL OF DENMARK

One of the first countries to emerge from lockdown, Denmark has returned to near normality, and classes at its acclaimed national film school —whose alumni include **Susanne Bier**, **Lars von Trier** and **Thomas Vinterberg** — are going ahead under new regulations for hygienic conditions. The university is notoriously selective. Besides fluency in Danish, all applicants must pass an entrance test including practical exercises and interviews before being admitted.

RTA SCHOOL OF MEDIA AT RYERSON UNIVERSITY

Amid the pandemic, Toronto's Ryerson has embraced a hybrid online and in-person format, with social distancing and pod teams during location shoots.

SAE INSTITUTE

Swiss universities have returned to semi-normality with reduced class sizes, social distancing and new hygiene regulations in place. Zurich's SAE — part of a network of institutes that spans 26 countries — will again offer instruction in the tech side of filmmaking, with 18-month and two-year bachelor's programs.

SAM SPIEGEL FILM AND TELEVISION SCHOOL

The Jerusalem school briefly went online-only during the first wave of COVID-19 in March and April, but new director **Dana Blankstein-Cohen** was able to restart classes and finish the semester as normal. The school even turned lockdown to its advantage with a Quarantine Stories competition that saw winners receive grants to turn their shut-in tales into short films.

VANCOUVER FILM SCHOOL

Since the pandemic, VFS industry programs have gone online. Students working remotely will return to in-person courses as soon as government safety guidelines permit it. During the lockdown, VFS has delivered equipment to student homes to allow remote production.

5

UCLA

LOS ANGELES

Amid the box office shutdown, UCLA alum **Gina Prince-Bythewood** entertained the self-isolating masses with her Netflix feature *The Old Guard*, which was viewed by 72 million subscribers in its first four weeks, according to the streamer. At 19, the filmmaker was at first rejected from the school but wrote a letter to its then-head, **Teri Schwartz**. "Two days later, she called me and told me she read my letter and I was in," says Prince-Bythewood. "She literally changed the trajectory of my life." The school will educate the next generation of Prince-Bythewoods with the new Forever Sunny Directing Scholarship, which provides the female recipient with support for four years to cover tuition and fees, as well as up to $50,000 to cover production costs on the recipient's thesis film. The Department of Film, Television and Digital Media also boasts diversity among its ranks, with the majority of both the student body (60 percent) and faculty (65 percent) being nonwhite. While the new school year begins under the leadership of interim dean **Brian Kite**, UCLA is looking to fill its top administrative spot, after Schwartz stepped down as dean a year ago.

TUITION **$27,712** UNDERGRAD, IN-STATE; **$57,466** UNDERGRAD, OUT-OF-STATE; **$17,486** GRAD, IN-STATE; **$32,588** GRAD, OUT-OF-STATE

ALUMNI **Frank Marshall**, **Ava DuVernay**, **Marielle Heller**

6

CHAPMAN UNIVERSITY

ORANGE, CALIFORNIA

Actively recruiting students from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds, Chapman's Dodge College of Film and Media Arts is launching a scholarship fund that will provide up to 10 full scholarships per year for underrepresented young men and women from the local community. Additionally, a mentorship program is set to launch in 2021 that will see the film school partner with L.A. and Orange County high schools and the nonprofit College Access Partnership. Faculty additions include dean **Stephen Galloway** (former *THR* executive editor), as well as nine Black female professors who will teach across the school's curriculum, which includes such new offerings as Black Cinema and Fake News. **Justin Simien** (*Dear White People*) says an influential course he took as a student was Acting for Non-Actors. "[Instructor] **Joel** [**Moffett**] spent the first few classes teaching us why *Star Wars* was actually about self-doubt and how to similarly drill down to the theme of any story," says Simien, who adds: "We eventually did scene work, but only after understanding that what we were actually learning was how to make creative choices driven by what we felt the story was ultimately about."

Netflix's Ted Sarandos delivered the keynote address at Chapman University in 2015.

TUITION **$56,830** UNDERGRAD; **$44,240** TO **$56,830** GRAD

ALUMNI **Matt** AND **Ross Duffer** *STRANGER THINGS*, **Carlos López Estrada** *BLINDSPOTTING*

7

LOYOLA MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY

LOS ANGELES

As construction continues on its Howard B. Fitzpatrick Pavilion, which will house teaching spaces, an AR/VR area and a state-of-the-art theater, LMU also has formally created five specializations in its MFA in film and television program: creative producing, directing fiction, directing nonfiction, cinematography and editing (plans to launch a new International Documentary minor based in Germany were put on hold, however). Classes are scheduled to return entirely online this fall, including a cross-disciplinary elective pairing animation students with screenwriting students and English majors to encourage side-by-side development of story ideas. Plus, with nine new full-time faculty hires (including four people of color), the expansion under new dean **Peggy Rajski** continues. Says **Brian Helgeland**, Oscar-winning writer of *L.A. Confidential*: "I learned how to write at LMU — first of all, by having it expected of me, and secondly, by having instructors with real industry writing experience. It was a film school that took the mystery out of film and replaced it with the practical, the craft. That's how I learned."

TUITION $52,553 UNDERGRAD; $20,775 TO $33,240 GRAD

ALUMNI **Francis Lawrence** *THE HUNGER GAMES*, **Jim Toth** HEAD OF CONTENT ACQUISITIONS AT QUIBI, **Patricia Whitcher** *CAPTAIN MARVEL* PRODUCER

8

CALARTS

VALENCIA, CALIFORNIA

As expected with a school that was founded by Walt Disney, CalArts leads in animation education. Since the creation of the best animated feature Oscar category in 2001, 12 of the 19 winning films were directed by CalArts alums. Grad **Bruce Wayne Smith** co-directed the recent Oscar-winning short *Hair Love*; the school is now investing in new classes about animation and identity like Afro-Centric Character Design in its Character Animation Program. Looking outside the scope of traditional animation, CalArts has also brought on Pulitzer winner and alum **Ann Telnaes** to teach Commentary Through Cartoons.

TUITION $52,850 UNDERGRAD; $52,850 GRAD

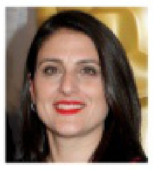
ALUMNI **Tim Burton, Brad Bird, Kirby Dick** *THE HUNTING GROUND*

9

EMERSON COLLEGE

BOSTON

Nestled in picturesque Boston's Back Bay, the liberal arts college has a globe-spanning footprint with the one-year-old Paris College of Art film program as well as the well-established 107,000-square-foot L.A. outpost on Sunset Boulevard. The Beantown campus, which serves most of the 1,700 undergrad and grad visual and media arts students, features an Emerging Media Lab that includes AR and VR suites as well as 3D modeling and animation. On the diversity front, the program has a nearly 50-50 male-female student ratio, with 24.2 percent of the Visual & Media Arts student body being persons of color (3.5 percent are Black), according to fall 2019 data. In 2018, Emerson announced the Norman Lear Scholarship Fund, which provides a four-year scholarship to students from underrepresented and underserved backgrounds. The first recipient, **Worlanyo Mensah** (2023), met Lear at his home in Los Angeles in September. Faculty comprises 11 percent persons of color, with 4 percent being Black (numbers are expected to increase for the 2020 academic year but are not complete by press time). Perhaps the biggest draw for prospective students is the active Emerson-Hollywood network. "I've hired Emerson interns at every job I've ever been at," says MGM film group president **Pam Abdy.** "I'm just a real advocate for the school."


Abdy

TUITION $50,240 UNDERGRAD; $1,296 GRAD, PER CREDIT

ALUMNI **Jay Leno, Richard LaGravenese, Adele Lim** SCREENWRITER, *CRAZY RICH ASIANS*

10

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA SCHOOL OF THE ARTS

WINSTON-SALEM

The alma mater of **Danny McBride, David Gordon Green** and **Jody Hill** — who have collaborated on hits like *Vice Principals* and *Eastbound & Down* — UNCSA is a small creative and performing arts conservatory that alum **Vera Herbert**, a co-executive producer on *This Is Us*, says "emulates a Hollywood studio system in producing student films, and from my first year I learned how to pitch, develop, take notes, and work with both my peers and the faculty to bring a project to fruition — and experience all the ups and downs that come with that." With training in drama, film, dance, music, design and production, and new offerings of motion-hand-face-capture, immersive VFX entertainment and effects technologies, the school, which plans to return with hybrid classes, is on the cutting edge of technology, launching an immersive storytelling residency in its technology lab last fall. Last year also marked UNCSA's first freshman filmmaking school class that was predominantly female, with a focus on creating a pipeline of women into the entertainment industry.

TUITION $6,497 UNDERGRAD, IN-STATE; $23,040 UNDERGRAD, OUT-OF-STATE; $9,169 GRAD, IN-STATE; $23,203 GRAD, OUT-OF-STATE

ALUMNI DIRECTORS **Brett Haley** *HEARTS BEAT LOUD*, **Jeff Nichols** *LOVING*

11

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS

AUSTIN

Between its facilities (including a motion-capture studio and one of the largest greenscreens outside Hollywood), its TV writers room workshop class (which culminates in a student-written series shopped to major networks) and an advanced producing class taught by alum **Matthew McConaughey**, UT has taken innovative approaches to film education. "RTF (Radio-Television-Film) helped me find my voice," says WME partner and Advisory Council member **Kevin Shivers**, who also cites the recent hires of **Ileana Sosa, Alex Rivera, Sarah Seulki Oh** and **Adrien Sebro** as new additions "to a talented and diverse faculty to create an empowering and creative experience."

TUITION $10,946 UNDERGRAD, IN-STATE; $38,748 UNDERGRAD, OUT-OF-STATE; $9,996 TO $10,882 GRAD, IN-STATE; $18,816 TO $20,310 GRAD, OUT-OF-STATE

ALUMNI **Wes Anderson, Renée Zellweger, Mark** AND **Jay Duplass**

12

WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY

MIDDLETOWN, CONNECTICUT

In addition to its new 16,000-square-foot expansion of its Center for Film Studies, the past year saw the launch of the Wesleyan Documentary Project, an initiative to teach, support and produce nonfiction film and video to students graduating into an industry that is experiencing a nonfiction boom. Doc producer **Sadia Shepard** (*The September Issue*) will be joining the faculty this fall, while recent classes included Oscilloscope co-founder **David Laub** teaching "The Art and Business of Contemporary Film" and *New York Times* critic **A.O. Scott** tackling Italian Cinema.

TUITION $69,704 TO $71,764 UNDERGRAD

ALUMNI **Joss Whedon, Matthew Weiner, Lin-Manuel Miranda**

13

STANFORD UNIVERSITY

PALO ALTO, CALIFORNIA

While the Palo Alto university offers an expanding film and media studies major — with lessons on film language, genre, video production and visual and narrative structures — it is known

Most years, students at DePaul learn while working at the Cinespace Chicago production facility.

DEPAUL: COURTESY OF SUBJECT. LMU: CORAL VON ZUMWALT/COURTESY OF SUBJECT. SYRACUSE: JOHN GREIM/LIGHTROCKET VIA GETTY IMAGES. FILM, STUDENTS, CLAPBOARD: ADOBE STOCK. ABDY: RANDY SHROPSHIRE/GETTY IMAGES.

Construction continues on LMU's Howard B. Fitzpatrick Pavilion, which will house teaching spaces, an AR/VR area and a state-of-the-art theater.

for its exclusive MFA in documentary film and video production program, which is capped at eight students annually. In their second year of the program, students produce a 15- to 20-minute thesis film on a pressing social issue, some of which have gone on to screen at Sundance, SXSW and Tribeca. The school is on track to return for some in-person classes this year and, after voicing support for the Black Lives Matter movement, says actionable plans for justice and equality issues are forthcoming.

TUITION $55,473 UNDERGRAD; $54,315 GRAD
ALUMNI **Lisa Joy** *WESTWORLD* CO-CREATOR, **Sarah Naftalis** WRITER, FX'S *WHAT WE DO IN THE SHADOWS*, **Ramona Diaz** *IMELDA*

14

COLUMBIA COLLEGE

CHICAGO

Columbia College will see changes to its faculty with filmmaker **Thelma Vickroy** starting as a new chair and cinematographer **Robert Edgecomb** joining as an assistant professor of photography. The school will also launch its new BA in Film and Television program — which encourages cross-pollination between the two mediums — while offering online, face-to-face and hybrid classes, with assignments redesigned to incorporate social distancing, smaller crews and remote production. Says alum **Carl Seaton** (*Batwoman*, *Chicago PD*): "I constantly run into people in different places who go, 'I went to Columbia,' and it's a constant thread. We are here to work, we're striving for excellence."

TUITION $27,142 TUITION ONLY
ALUMNI **Lena Waithe, George Tillman Jr., Christian Sprenge** CINEMATOGRAPHER, *ATLANTA*

15

BOSTON UNIVERSITY

BOSTON

This East Coast institution has trained Hollywood's old guard, like **Jim Gianopulos**, as well as creatives shaking up the industry, like *Uncut Gems* helmers **Josh** and **Benny Safdie**. While the school is situated far from entertainment hubs, it re-creates the business of content creation on campus with courses like Hothouse Productions, a student-run production banner that shoots PSAs and short documentaries for local nonprofits and TV stations. The school also boasts a revamped MFA in screenwriting, which will see students take a fourth semester in Los Angeles.

TUITION $56,854 UNDERGRAD; $57,686 GRAD
ALUMNI **Jennifer Getzinger** DIRECTOR, *WESTWORLD*, **Bonnie Hammer, Bonnie Arnold**

16

SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY

SYRACUSE, NEW YORK

After launching a new BFA film curriculum last year offering hands-on experience starting freshman year, Syracuse's College of Visual and Performing Arts has added essay film, script analysis and sci-fi courses, along with a new film history survey class that will take an anti-sexist, anti-racist and international approach to cinema history from the 1960s to today. With classes planned for in-person and hybrid instruction, its film program, the Newhouse School (Syracuse divides up performing arts and film disciplines), will continue to expand its offerings in TV, radio, podcasting, VFX, production design and entrepreneurship with an emphasis on diversity, inclusion and equity. Pixar president **Jim Morris** credits the animation courses he took at Syracuse for setting him on his path: "The technology then was stone age compared to what we do at Pixar now, but the soul of creating the illusion of life has never changed."

TUITION $54,270 UNDERGRAD; $30,294 GRAD
ALUMNI **Dan Silver** DISNEY+, **Danny Zuker, Mike Lasker** SONY VFX SUPERVISOR

17

ITHACA COLLEGE

NEW YORK

At the Roy H. Park School of Communications, student-run production company Park Productions has been delivering client-driven materials like local TV ads and PSAs for a half-decade, allowing students to put their production and story skills to work. Newer additions at the school include an MBA program in Entertainment and Media Management and a collaboration with Ithaca's business school, as well as West African filmmaker **Idrissou Mora-Kpai** joining the faculty. Says *One Day at a Time* writer and executive producer **Mike Royce**: "Ithaca taught me that, while it was fine to idolize **Spielberg**, it was even better to graduate knowing how to be me."

TUITION $46,610 UNDERGRAD; STARTING AT $10,500 GRAD
ALUMNI **David Boreanaz, Liz Tigelaar** SHOWRUNNER, *LITTLE FIRES EVERYWHERE*

18

ARTCENTER COLLEGE OF DESIGN

PASADENA

This Pasadena-based program, which has a three-track focus on directing, editing and cinematography, is known for educating blockbuster helmers like **Zach Snyder** and **Michael Bay**, but the film school offers more than just technical wizardry by taking advantage of ArtCenter's robust advertising and design programs. A cross-curriculum class, Media Maker's Lab, sees students create a semester-long advertising agency, taking a note from alum Bay, who got his start directing commercials before graduating to giant robots. "It was those courses that enabled me to develop my own personal style and point of view," says Snyder, who is also a board of trustees member, of his BFA production classes. "The most important lesson I learned was to value your own unique perspective."

TUITION $45,776 UNDERGRAD; $48,380 GRAD
ALUMNI **Don Burgess** CINEMATOGRAPHER, *AQUAMAN*, **Ericson Core** DIRECTOR, *TOGO*, **Tarsem Singh** DIRECTOR, *THE FALL*

19

SAN FRANCISCO STATE

SAN FRANCISCO

SF State was founded in the '60s with an emphasis on political activism and experimental filmmaking, an ethos that can be seen in its contemporary coursework, with classes like Experimental Documentary. The program, which has been under the direction of noted film scholar **Celine Parreñas Shimizu** for a year, outlines an 18-point statement of values surrounding "diversity, equity and inclusion" (point 18 reads: "Down with censorship!"). The school recently named endowed chairs in both African American Cinema and Social Justice Fiction Filmmaking — **Artel Great** and **Mayuran Tiruchelvam**, respectively.

TUITION $7,440 UNDERGRAD; $8,704 GRAD
ALUMNI **Annette Bening, Lisa Cholodenko, Steven Zaillian**

20

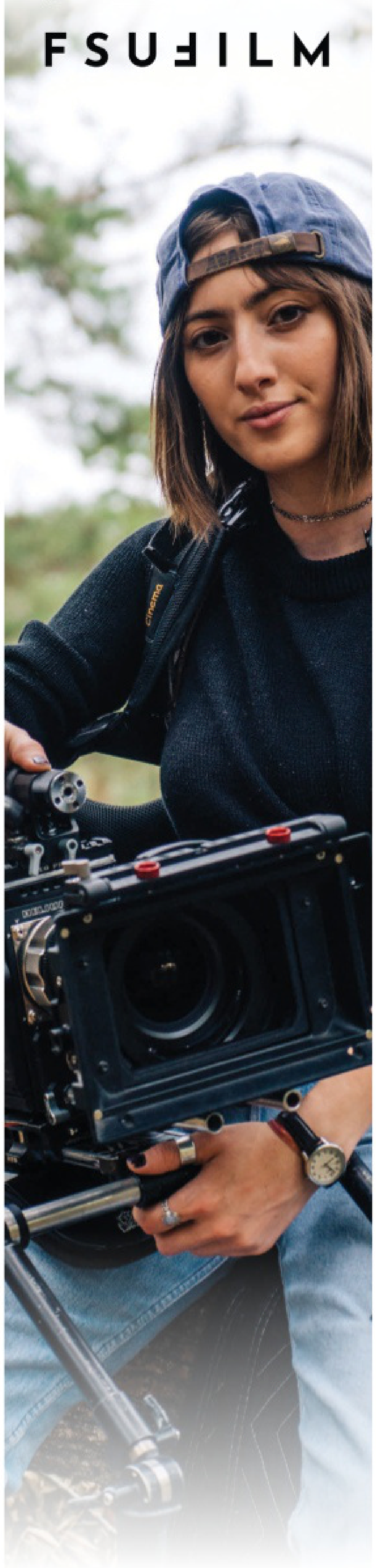
FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY

TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA

Amid the renewed call for diversity and Black representation, Florida State established a Diverse Voices in Cinema grant this year for underrepresented film school alumni who seek to overcome injustice through cinematic storytelling. It will include a $10,000 production grant, a full production equipment package, access to postproduction facilities, distribution consultation and a social media campaign. The university has also set up an

PRODUCTION
DIRECTOR
CAMERA
DATE
SCENE
TAKE

Syracuse University's S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications



FSUFILM

FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF MOTION PICTURE ARTS

film.fsu.edu

Facilities at Cal State Northridge include film and television soundstages, postproduction and mixing suites, a new media lab, and a digital visual effects and animation suite.

Equality Scholarship to support first-year students of color, as well as faculty and staff workshop initiatives and annual diversity events. Though classes are set to resume fully in person this fall, FSU will introduce a Real Solutions for Real-Time Filmmaking curriculum that teaches students how to navigate virtual filmmaking with a focus on the innovative technology for previsualization of animated and live-action films. "At the end of the day, it's the stories that matter, and FSU is empowering filmmakers to tell the stories they want to tell," says *Race to Witch Mountain* writer **Matt Lopez** of his experience at the college, which counts *Moonlight* helmer **Barry Jenkins** as its star pupil.

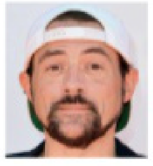
TUITION $7,328 UNDERGRAD, IN-STATE; $24,517 UNDERGRAD, OUT-OF-STATE; $22,619 GRAD, IN-STATE; $51,032 GRAD, OUT-OF-STATE

ALUMNI **Stephen Broussard** MARVEL STUDIOS VP PRODUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT, **James Laxton** CINEMATOGRAPHER, *IF BEALE STREET COULD TALK*, **Lauren Miller Rogen** DIRECTOR, *LIKE FATHER*

21

RINGLING COLLEGE OF ART & DESIGN

SARASOTA, FLORIDA



Smith

Accounting for Hollywood's ever-evolving definition of content, Ringling has introduced a new emphasis under its BFA film program: Branded Entertainment. The curriculum will focus on creating more advertorial content as a way to provide a faster track to the director's chair than the traditional film or television career path. Last year, the Florida school finished construction on its 36,000-square-foot Studio Labs complex, which includes five soundstages, multiple edit suites, dubbing and Foley stages, and a color-correct theater, along with traditional classrooms. And with the complex comes the likes of **Beau Bridges**, **Kevin Smith** and **Dylan McDermott** as visiting filmmakers, which have long been part of the program. "Two big experiences were getting to be in the edit room with **Werner Herzog** and taking a lighting workshop with [*Inception* cinematographer] **Wally Pfister**," says alum **Jason Letkiewicz**, who is the senior writer and producer on this year's Emmys broadcast. "Herzog changed the way I think about storytelling, and Wally opened my eyes to so many new possibilities on set."

TUITION $45,130 UNDERGRAD

ALUMNI EDITOR **Andrew Halley**

22

RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL OF DESIGN

PROVIDENCE

As one of the premier fine art schools in the country, this Providence mainstay boasts an avant-garde student body spanning all mediums (think **David Byrne**, who attended in the early '70s). The 2019-20 student body reflects the college's commitment to diversity, with 33 percent domestic students of color, including 5 percent Black (the 37 percent international students are not broken out by race). Likewise, 19 percent of the domestic faculty is of color, while 5 percent is Black (7 percent hail from abroad). Although many colleges are forgoing face-to-face instruction due to COVID-19, RISD plans to keep its upcoming core studio and shop-based courses in person with expanded spaces to ensure safe social distancing (courses that don't require hands-on technique will be offered remotely or in a hybrid version). That's a huge plus for the program, whose graduates have excelled in the field of animation in recent years.

TUITION $53,820 UNDERGRAD

ALUMNI **Gus Van Sant**, **Seth MacFarlane**, **Martha Coolidge**

23

SAVANNAH COLLEGE OF ART & DESIGN

SAVANNAH, GEORGIA

While SCAD's signature event, the annual Savannah Film Festival — with its big-name attendees and awards circuit influence — is on hiatus because of the pandemic, the school will continue (largely online) with a new curriculum, led by its Collaborative Experiences in the School of Entertainment Arts class, where students from different film specializations work together start-to-finish on a piece of content. "The time I spent in Savannah fully immersed in a creative community and constantly making stuff was probably the most valuable experience in my life," says producer **Jett Steiger** (*Super Dark Times*). "Filmmaking is a team sport, and the only way you can really learn how to do it is to find a group of people you trust and go make something — SCAD gave me that opportunity over and over again." Those opportunities will be expanded more than ever this year after SCAD recently created 15 endowed scholarships for incoming and current Black students.

TUITION $37,575 UNDERGRAD; $38,475 GRAD

ALUMNI **DeRon Horton** ACTOR, *DEAR WHITE PEOPLE*, **Steven Walker**, **Q. Manning** AND **Peter Yoder** FOUNDERS OF DIGITAL PRODUCT DESIGN AGENCY ROCKSAUCE STUDIOS

24

DEPAUL UNIVERSITY

CHICAGO

While it's not in L.A. or NYC, DePaul's Chicago campus offers entry into another of the nation's entertainment hubs: If screenwriting and production students want to get serious about comedy, the school offers a degree

CSUN: COURTESY OF SUBJECT. ACADEMY: GLENSTAR/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO. CAMERA, STUDENT: ADOBE STOCK. SMITH: STEVE GRANITZ/WIREIMAGE.

program in conjunction with the famed Second City theater, which boasts a who's who of comedy alums, including **Dan Aykroyd**, **Tina Fey**, **Jordan Peele** and **Stephen Colbert**. And for the practical production curriculum, DePaul students learn while working on soundstages at Cinespace Chicago, a busy production facility that has played host to everything from **Dick Wolf**'s *Chicago* franchise to FX's *Fargo* and Fox's *Empire*. "We were encouraged to make things as often as possible (especially outside of class), and that's exactly what I did," says alum **Daniel Willis**, director on *Grey's Anatomy* and *The Black List*. "When I left DePaul, I had material that I could show, and those work samples have opened many doors for me over the years."

TUITION $40,511 UNDERGRAD; $20,760 TO $31,140 GRAD

ALUMNI **Kevin McGrail** PRODUCER, **LeBron James'** *THE SHOP*, **Art O'Leary** EDITOR, *DEADLIST CATCH*, **Brian Lannin** CINEMATOGRAPHER, *HIGH MAINTENANCE*

25

CAL STATE UNIVERSITY NORTHRIDGE

LOS ANGELES

This state school offers a cost-effective education that has the added value of being Los Angeles-adjacent. And thanks to a grant from the Hollywood Foreign Press Association, the department of cinema and television is finishing a three-year cycle of updating production facilities, which includes new camera, sound and lighting equipment. Curriculum additions include a dedicated documentary production program, while extracurricular adds include a gallery devoted to the art of film posters, an upgraded script library and a public screening series that centers on 21st century LGBTQ films and rock 'n' roll fare.

TUITION $7,012 UNDERGRAD; $8,446 GRAD

ALUMNI **Glenn S. Gainor** HEAD OF PHYSICAL PRODUCTION AT SCREEN GEMS, **Ami Cohen** EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF TELEVISION AT LIONSGATE, **John Hampian** VP PHYSICAL PRODUCTION AT LUCASFILM

Tatiana Siegel contributed to this report.

10 ALTERNATIVES IN N.Y. AND L.A.

If the elite schools are off-limits, these robust programs offer plenty of hands-on training in a range of disciplines

NEW YORK

CITY COLLEGE OF NEW YORK
Founded in 1941 as the first film program in the U.S., City College offers a BFA in film and video (the only public NYC institution to do so) as well as MFA tracks in fiction and documentary, where students direct their own thesis projects and serve as cinematographer, editor or producer on another thesis production.

NEW YORK FILM ACADEMY
With plans to return for hybrid classes at its New York, L.A. and South Beach Miami campuses, NYFA continues its hands-on approach in which first-year students write, direct, shoot and edit eight short films each and work with a crew of 28 more.

THE NEW SCHOOL
The school, which has moved all its fall courses online, offers a film production minor that gives hands-on lessons in how to create a short film through planning, production and editing, and teaches use of cameras, film equipment, recording techniques and post-production software.

PACE UNIVERSITY
Pace's undergraduate film program focuses on cinema in the digital era, with courses — which will be a mix of online, in-person and hybrid this fall — on cinematography, multiplatform editing and lighting for HD.

PRATT INSTITUTE
The past year has seen Pratt continue to expand, with growing VR coursework, serialized storytelling offerings and a new class centered on the work of *Killer of Sheep* director **Charles Burnett** (culminating in a Q&A with the filmmaker).

LOS ANGELES

CAL STATE LOS ANGELES
Part of the state's expansive public university system, Cal State L.A. recently offered a 15-week educational program, Women Making Film, a collaboration between the school and Canon, with special support from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

LOS ANGELES FILM SCHOOL
A growing alumni network includes **Kyle Newacheck**, who was behind one of the Netflix's most popular films of 2019, **Adam Sandler**'s *Murder Mystery*, and **Hannah Lux Davis**, the go-to music video director for **Ariana Grande**.

PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY
The film studies program in Malibu offers majors and minors, as well as an MFA in Writing for Screen and Television. An extensive film theory catalog includes several classes on the intersection of religion and media (the school is affiliated with the Church of Christ).

HUSSIAN COLLEGE LOS ANGELES
Formerly known as Studio School, Hussian offers BFA programs in film and digital content, as well as commercial dance, acting and contemporary musical theater and film.

LOS ANGELES CITY COLLEGE
Both certificate and associate's degree programs are offered at the public community college, which can provide an inexpensive (in-state tuition is $1,220) jumping-off point for specific entertainment vocations like editing and cinematography. — M.G. AND K.C.

NEW YORK FILM ACADEMY

New York Film Academy

I am a SCAD GRAD

DeRon Horton

B.F.A., performing arts, 2015

DeRon shines on the small screen in *American Vandal*, *American Horror Story: 1984*, and *Dear White People*.

Step into the spotlight.
scad.edu/film-tv

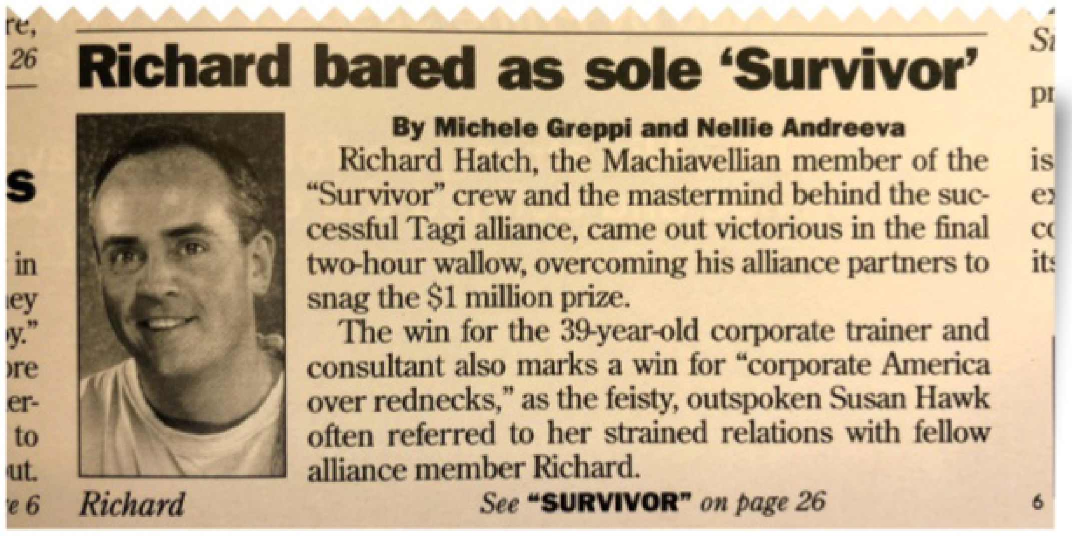
SCAD

CBS VIA GETTY IMAGES

1990 1991 1992 1993 1994 1995 1996 1997 1998 1999 **2000** 2001 2002 2003 2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010

20 Years Ago, Richard Hatch Became the First *Survivor*

Two decades, 40 seasons and a dozen controversies into its run, *Survivor* hasn't been able to duplicate the success of its first outing. *Survivor: Borneo* debuted on CBS on May 31, 2000, with 16 competitors duking it out off the coast of Malaysia. The finale, which aired Aug. 23, saw Richard Hatch, then 39, win the $1 million prize; it was the highest-rated episode in *Survivor* history, drawing 51.7 million viewers (surpassing that year's World Series, NBA finals, NCAA men's basketball finals and Grammy Awards). Even before the show began airing, Hatch had a feeling it would "knock people's socks off," he tells *The Hollywood Reporter*. But winning the whole thing resulted in his life doing "a 360 multiple times." (He was even asked to host a season opener of NBC's *Saturday Night Live*, but CBS squashed the idea.) An openly gay corporate trainer with a propensity for competing in the buff, Hatch became a household name as one of reality TV's first — and most brilliantly devious — villains. "But," says Hatch, "I knew I wasn't a villain, I knew I played within the rules." Squeaking out a victory with a 4-3 tribal council vote, Hatch single-handedly invented the strategic tactics that have become *Survivor*'s signature. His forged alliances and hairpin betrayals shocked even the show's host Jeff Probst and creator Mark Burnett. "For two decades now, people have been learning to play the way I played initially," boasts Hatch. Following the win, he was sentenced to 51 months in prison for not paying taxes on his *Survivor* prize money — and received another nine-month stint for failing to amend his 2000 tax return. Through it all, he remained close with fellow finalist Rudy Boesch, an ex-Navy SEAL who died in 2019 at 91. "I think we changed the way our society looks at who gay people are in relation to straight people in the country," Hatch says. Notes Probst: "*Survivor* owes a debt of gratitude to that first group of players. It really laid the groundwork for the show that is still on the air 40 seasons later." — KIRSTEN CHUBA



Richard bared as sole 'Survivor'

By Michele Greppi and Nellie Andreeva

Richard Hatch, the Machiavellian member of the "Survivor" crew and the mastermind behind the successful Tagi alliance, came out victorious in the final two-hour wallow, overcoming his alliance partners to snag the $1 million prize.

The win for the 39-year-old corporate trainer and consultant also marks a win for "corporate America over rednecks," as the feisty, outspoken Susan Hawk often referred to her strained relations with fellow alliance member Richard.

Richard

See **"SURVIVOR"** *on page 26*

6

Richard Hatch and fellow *Survivor: Borneo* competitor Susan Hawk on the reality series. Inset: *THR*'s Aug. 24, 2000, coverage of the season finale.

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